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Wesley
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- AN

THE WORLD'S EPOCH-MAKERS

EDITED BY

OLIPHANT SMEATON

Wesley and Methodism

By F. J. Snell

PREVIOUS VOLUME IN THIS SERIES :—

Cranmer and
The Reformation in England.
By Arthur D. Innes, M.A.

For complete List see end.

THE WORLD'S EPOCH-MAKERS

Wesley and Methodism

By

F. J. Snell, M.A. (Oxon.)

Author of

"The Fourteenth Century" (Periods of European Literature)

"Exspecta Dominum; viriliter age; noli diffidere; noli discedere; sed corpus et animam expone constanter pro gloria Dei." — *Imitatio Christi.*

Cited by Wesley in an eirenicon to the Clergy.

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PREFACE

WHAT has been attempted in the present work? Certainly, not a full and particular biography of John Wesley. He, it is true, is the central figure, and it is hoped that sufficient heed has been given to his personal actions and qualities to ensure a distinct, a recognisable, and—if only it might be!—vivid portrait of that king of men. But a full and particular biography would call for more pages than go to compose the entire work.

On the other hand, the aim has been something other than to string together a series of essays on various aspects of Methodism. While the writer has avoided Tyerman's method of strict chronological order—excellent though it is for some purposes—as involving broken lights and insecure perspective, he has striven to mark the stages of Methodist evolution by treating in successive chapters characteristics of the movement, as they assumed exceptional importance at successive periods of Wesley's life.

Naturally, however, my first care has been to provide a fitting introduction for the man with whom the movement is inseparably associated. It may be, as Southey suggests, that, if Wesley had not existed,

another prophet would have arisen, that Methodism was in the air, and certain to take shape one way or another. That may be, but he who shaped Methodism was John Wesley; and if the movement was not an accident, neither was the man. Personalities are of secular growth. Long before Wesley appeared in the flesh, a thousand influences had been working to fashion his character and to steel his nerve. A biographer, however, can trace back those influences only a very little way.

Wesley steps out of boyhood into University life, into the life of the world. His path is still dark. He has not found his mission. There follows an era of perturbation, which Böhler nearly but not quite ends, and Wesley begins to have inklings of his destiny. At this point it is natural to survey the spiritual conditions of his age and country. The remedy is next dealt with, and, after that, the scandal caused by its application. Then comes a statement of Wesley's special beliefs and of sundry controversies, occupying the early and middle periods of his larger ministry. The subject of organisation is reserved to the last, the matter having acquired peculiar interest in Wesley's age in relation to the Church of England, from which Methodism was slowly but surely drifting. If I have not been fastidious about the exact sequence of events, I have endeavoured to attain something like sequence of ideas—in other words, to record history philosophically.

I cannot lay claim to much original research, but, by way of preparation, I studied for myself the fourteen tomes of Wesley's Works; besides plentiful odd volumes of miscellaneous Methodist literature.

Recent numbers of the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* contain interesting and valuable papers by Mr. Telford and Mr. M'Cullagh, and I have to thank those very competent writers for more than one useful hint. I have, of course, laid under contribution the stock biographies of Wesley, as is shown by frequent references in the text; and, lastly, I have drawn on my own general reading for the purpose of illumination.

F. J. SNELL.

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WESLEY AND METHODISM

CHAPTER I

KITH AND KIN

Epworth — Intellectual Parity — Puritan Antecedents — Dr. Annesley—John Wesley on the Puritans—The Enlistment of Samuel Wesley—Aristocratic Connections—The Annesleys —Lord Mornington and Charles Wesley—"Cyrus" and "Aspasia"—Family Pride—"Old Jeffrey"—Samuel Wesley as Parish Priest—The New Generation.

LINCOLNSHIRE, that paradise of graziers, owns no more fertile region than the "low levels," with their rich brown loam, of the Isle of Axholme. The word "isle" in this, as in other English place-names,—the Isle of Athelney, the Isle of Dogs, etc.,—is reminiscent of earlier times and vanished conditions. Already in the seventeenth century the skill and patience of a Danish financier had succeeded in transforming the king's chase. The malarial swamp had been witched into smiling pastures. The country had ceased to be "drowned" by the swelling Trent. Axholme, however, was still an isle. It was a river-isle, a Mesopotamia, moated (as the Laureate has it) by Idle, and

Don, and Torn, and Trent,—quite comedy names, when you think of it,—and the old Bykers dyke, knitting stream to stream.

The metropolis of the isle is the little market-town of Epworth, peopled by some two thousand souls, and perched on a gentle slope. The church—nave, aisle, chancel, tower—is a cynosure for neighbouring eyes, but the representative pilgrim will turn, perhaps, first of all to the parsonage, the cradle of Methodism, the home of a family of genius.

'Twas in 1696 that the Rev. Samuel Wesley entered on the living of Epworth,—given to him posthumously, as it were, by good Queen Mary,—and took possession of the rectory house. Not an imposing structure, it was built throughout of wood and plaster, had a thatch roof, and contained only seven rooms of any size. But, poor as it was, the house may have been an improvement on the mean cot, composed of reed and clay, wherewith Samuel Wesley and Susanna, his wife, had been forced to content themselves at South Ormsby.

It may be questioned if in all Lincolnshire there could have been found an instance of more perfect mating than was offered by this worthy pair, and that whether we think of taste and mental vigour, or simply of family tradition and inherited station. Wife and husband drew their chief, and well-nigh their sole, happiness from the rigid performance of duty. That may stand for taste. Duty is to some minds what art or music is to others—the object of warm devotion and of infinite refinements.

The rector of Epworth was at once a wit, a poet, and a scholar. His versified "Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ" pleased Queen Mary amazingly, or Epworth

would never have acquired Samuel Wesley. Pope knew him well, and Pope, writing to Swift, observes, "I call him what he is—a learned man." Earlier he had honoured Wesley by coupling him with Watts in the *Dunciad*. Pope, however, became sensible of the injustice, and in the revised edition of the poem the names of both divines were discreetly expunged.

Mrs. Wesley was not a classic, but on her devolved the education, in the widest sense, of her many children. For her own purpose she raised pedagogy to a science; and her methods of instruction were brilliantly reflected in the careers of, at least, two of her sons. Nevertheless, there was something odd, something casual, something *uncanny* in her methods.

Samuel, the eldest-born, never spoke till he was five. He "found his tongue" suddenly. Sam had behaved like most boys. He had got lost. His mother searched for him, and forgetting that he was dumb, kept calling on him to answer. All at once he replied, "Here I am, mother!" From that hour Sam displayed aptitude in learning, as well as a singularly retentive memory; and Mrs. Wesley, regarding him as a proof of the wisdom of not "forcing" her children, refrained, except in the case of the youngest, from teaching them even the alphabet *till they were five*. She was a capable schoolmistress, however. "It is almost incredible," she says, "what a child may be taught in a quarter of a year by a vigorous application."

Mrs. Wesley aimed not only at moulding the mind, but at forming the character; and it is easy to trace in the ethics of the parsonage a distinct vein of Puritanism. To the horror of the modern Methodist, though not to the horror of John Wesley—filially

inconsistent in this point alone—card-playing was admitted. But masquerades, balls, plays, operas, and similar diversions, were held as among the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and accordingly tabooed.

This view of amusements was natural enough. Both Samuel and Susanna were of Puritan descent. Samuel's grandfather, Bartholomew Wesley (or Westley), had been ejected from his Dorsetshire living under the provisions of the Act of Uniformity. His father, John Wesley, had not only been ejected, but imprisoned four times for preaching the doctrines of the Gathered Church. Impatient of the gag—"Woe is me," said he, "if I preach not the gospel!"—he contemplated a voyage to Maryland or Surinam, but finally settled down as minister of a conventicle at Poole.

Mrs. Wesley's father, Dr. Samuel Annesley, was also of the Puritan way. He has been held a republican among republicans, and not without reason, if we are to judge from a sermon published by order of the Commons. But, according to his own statement, he had publicly expressed detestation of the "horrid murder" of the king. He had refused a horse for service at the battle of Worcester, and his disparagement of Cromwell had driven him from a fat living to the smallest parish in London. The Act of Uniformity drove him out of that. Annesley, however, did not lack means. He was able to support his large family —"two dozen or a quarter of a hundred"—in comfort, and to relieve his less fortunate brethren. "How many ministers had starved," says Williams, in his funeral sermon, "if Dr. Annesley had died thirty-four years since!"

This staunch Puritan was of fine presence and eloquent speech, and the graces of his style were celebrated in pleasing verse by the author of *Robinson Crusoe*:

"The Sacred Bow he so divinely drew,
That every shaft both *hit* and overthrew.
His native candour and familiar style,
Which did so oft his hearers' hours beguile,
Charmed us with godliness; and while he spake,
We loved the doctrine for the teacher's sake.
While he informed us what those doctrines meant,
By dint of practice more than argument,
Strange were the charms of his sincerity,
Which made his actions and his words agree."

There has always been a prejudice among Churchfolk against those whom Dr. Johnson, himself as prejudiced as any, calls "sectaries." Devoted to the Church of England, and opposed to schism, if not to schismatics, John Wesley was never ashamed of his Puritan connections. He regarded the pick of the party as victims of oppression. Going back to the days of the Reformation, he says of Cartwright, "I look upon him and the body of Puritans in that age (to whom the German Anabaptists bore small resemblance) to have been both the most learned and most pious men that were then in the English nation. Nor did they separate from the Church, but were driven out, whether they would or no." In his *Farther Appeal* he writes with sturdy approbation of "that venerable man," Philip Henry. In his *Thoughts upon Liberty*, he dilates indignantly on the penalties inflicted on the heroes of Nonconformity.

It may be well to mention how Samuel Wesley turned Churchman. As a youth, he studied at a

Stepney Dissenting academy, and, whilst thus engaged, enjoyed the by no means contemptible privilege of listening to a homely divine, whom he calls, with loving familiarity, "Friend Bunyan." Wesley, however, was more than a student. He was "a dabbler in rhyme and faction," and applauded by his elders, sharpened his wit at the expense of Church and State. On that account he was chosen to answer some severe invectives against Dissent.

This apparently congenial task led to an unexpected result. The political Dissenter saw the error of his ways. Saul became Paul, and the Anglican ministry gained a valuable recruit in the person of Samuel Wesley. Neither Samuel nor John was inclined to spare an antagonist, and to enter the lists against either was a prospect sufficiently terrible. The Wesley intellect was acutely logical; and satire was their native element, from which, at the height of evangelical fervour, they escaped with difficulty.

Samuel Wesley's inclination for polemics probably reached its acme during a fierce Lincolnshire election, in which he was compelled to "rat," in order to preserve a larger consistency and maintain inviolate his loyalty to the Church. The "Isle people" went the other way and revenged themselves on the parson by drumming, shouting, and firing off pistols and guns, under the window of the room in which his wife lay after a recent confinement. This may be termed mob-argument, and it contradicted, in every particular, the methods and manners of the inmates.

The rector's children were carefully trained in the duties of their station and—please, remark!—were taught politeness towards inferiors no less than towards

their equals. In Susanna Wesley's girlhood, when the traditions of university education and State patronage still lingered in Nonconformist circles, the social disparity between the Anglican clergy and their rivals was hardly perceptible; and, in point of fact, the names of both husband and wife—the former slightly modified—adorn the pages of Burke. Rather curiously, the aristocratic connection is, in each case, Hibernian.

Mrs. Wesley was related, though not in any near degree, to the Earl of Anglesey, a statesman whom Bishop Burnet describes as "a man of grave deportment," but who, in spite of gravity, "stuck at nothing, and was ashamed of nothing." The common ancestor of this nobleman and Dr. Samuel Annesley was Robert Annesley, Esq., of Newport-Pagnell, who, in the reign of Elizabeth, aided in suppressing the rebellion of the Earl of Desmond. Rewarded with lands in Ireland, he settled in that country as an "undertaker," *i.e.* as a coloniser. His son, Francis Annesley, was created by Charles I. Baron Mountnorris and Viscount Valentia in the peerage of Ireland.

On the outbreak of the Civil War, Arthur, Robert Annesley's grandson, first took the side of the king, but afterwards passed over to the Parliament. At the critical juncture of the Restoration, he not only supported Monk, but was his principal coadjutor in the House of Commons. For this important and dangerous service—he had succeeded to the Irish titles and estates in 1660—he was created Baron Annesley and Earl of Anglesey in the peerage of England.

Bishop Burnet notwithstanding, Lord Anglesey was no worthless renegade. As Arthur Annesley he had obtained possession of the original MS. of the "Eikon

Basilike," and, what was more, had enjoyed the friendship of him who answered it. When Milton, "fallen on evil days," published his *History of England*, the public licenser cut out the portion relating to the Long Parliament. The author applied to Lord Anglesey, who exerted his influence, and with such effect that the description was reinserted, and the work published entire.

Thus the former Commonwealth man did not forget old friends. Indeed, Lord Anglesey is said to have chosen his domestic chaplains from the ranks of the ejected. Nor was he indifferent to his cousin, Dr. Annesley, whom he advised, but advised in vain, to conform. Financially, the point was of small consequence. Annesley, says one of his sons-in-law, "had a good estate and scorned to be rich while any man was poor." Neither peer nor preacher, however, appears to have done anything for the Wesleys—a circumstance, to a biographer, very odd.

When the Wesleys had been for some years at Epworth, a Mr. Garrett Wesley, who had landed estates in Ireland, sent to inquire of the rector whether among his sons there was any of the name of Charles. Should that be so, he was willing to adopt him and appoint him his heir. The decision was referred to Charles Wesley, then a Westminster scholar, by whom the offer was declined. Mr. Garrett Wesley chose in his stead a scion of the house of Colley, and a maternal relation of his own. This Richard Colley Wesley became Barron Mornington, and his son, Garrett, advanced to the dignity of an earldom, was the well-known composer.

In his old age Charles Wesley, who had made, as

his brother thought, such a fair escape, came to know the second Lord Mornington; and the peer-musician used to engage in weekly practices at his friend's house with Wesley's talented sons, Charles and Samuel. He both loved and revered their father, and, writing to him, observes, "I can with truth say that I esteem the commencement of your acquaintance one of the happiest moments of my life."

Even this coincidence does not exhaust the network of relationships. The Earl of Mornington's godmother was a Mrs. Delany, who had been Mrs. Pendarvis. The lady's maiden name was Granville, and she was a niece of the first Lord Lansdowne. Now the "Cyrus" of her Correspondence, which was published, with her Autobiography, in 1862, has been ascertained to have been John Wesley, the collegian. Her own pseudonym, as Mrs. Pendarvis, was "Aspasia."

In 1733 she wrote from Dangan, one of the Mornington estates: "As to the ridicule that Cyrus has been exposed to, I do not at all wonder at it. Religion in its plainest dress suffers daily from the insolence and ignorance of the world. How much, then, can that person escape who appears openly in its cause?" "Aspasia's" last letter to "Cyrus" is dated 1734. The year after, Wesley departed for Georgia, and "Cyrus" and "Aspasia" corresponded no more.

The Earl of Mornington, it is hardly necessary to recall, was the father of the Marquess Wellesley and the Duke of Wellington. The Marquess rid himself of the Wesley name and the Wesley estates. The younger and more famous brother continued to be known as "Arthur Wesley" till he was thirty. Afterwards he appears to have acquiesced in the change of

nomenclature; and in the Army List of 1801 his name is given, for the first time, as "Wellesley." It would be of some interest to learn the motive of the change. Was the name "Wesley," the condition of fortune, too mean in itself, or had it become debased by its associations? Wellesley is certainly the more sounding patronymic.

The Epworth family was miserably poor. The head of the house was imprisoned for debt, and owed his release from severe difficulties to public subscription organised by Archbishop Sharp. But, in the midst of their troubles, the Wesleys preserved their self-respect, and even indulged a little pride. This was especially the case with reference to matrimonial alliances.

"My brother Charles," says John Wesley, "had an attachment in early youth to an amiable girl of inferior birth. This was much opposed by my mother and her family, who mentioned it with concern to my uncle. Finding from my father that this was the chief objection, my uncle only replied, 'Then there is no family blood? I hear the girl is good, but of no family.' 'Nor fortune either,' said my mother. He made no reply, but sent my brother a sum of money as a wedding-present, and, I believe, sincerely regretted that he was ultimately crossed in his inclination."[1]

[1] Charles, however, duly profited by the lesson. When his brother John was old enough to know better, he conceived the idea of uniting himself in the bands of matrimony to a Mrs. Grace Murray, described as a "very pious and respectable woman," but not his equal in rank. Mr. Charles took the matter adroitly in hand, and, with Mr. Whitefield as an ally, effected the marriage of the lady with a Mr. Bennett, one of the preachers, during her lover's absence. On being informed of his fate, the disappointed swain ruefully confessed that "the sons of Zeruiah were too strong for him."

Probably it was pride, quite as much as politics, that rendered the Wesleys unpopular in Lincolnshire. Their most reputable neighbours—small landowners or yeomen of parsimonious habits—were not of the class the clergy prefer to visit with; and it is clear that on social matters the Wesleys (or, perhaps, the Annesleys) had very positive notions. When the burning of the rectory caused a temporary separation of the family, Mrs. Wesley regretted the associations amongst which her children were thrown, and which led, among other disasters, to the acquisition of a faulty accent. The regret was intelligible enough in a careful mother, but such fastidiousness could not, in the nature of things, ingratiate her with the uneducated and scornful boors, who drummed, and shouted, and fired off pistols and guns.

The fire itself, preceded by a rehearsal, was, there is good reason to believe, the work of an incendiary. John Wesley, then a child of five, always regarded it as one of the capital events of his life, and well he might, seeing that he narrowly escaped an untimely end.

"God saved him," says his father, "by almost a miracle. He only was forgot by the servants in the hurry. He ran to the window towards the yard, stood upon a chair, and cried for help. There were now a few people gathered, one of whom, who loves me, helped another up to the window. The child, seeing a man come into the window, was frightened, and ran away to get to his mother's chamber. He could not open the door, so ran back again. The man was fallen down from the window, and all the bed and hangings in the room where he was were blazing.

They helped up the man the second time, and poor Jacky leaped into his arms, and was saved. I could not believe it till I had kissed him two or three times."

When, in later life, Wesley became saturated with the idea of hell, he looked back to this incident as emblematical of another conflagration and another escape. Under one of his portraits is engraved a house in flames, and beneath that a motto, to Wesley endlessly suggestive—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?"

The restoration of the parsonage brought with it, outwardly, an almost idyllic change. Instead of "foul beasts" and "Erymanthean boars," we hear of fronts planted with wall-fruit; of mulberry trees, cherry trees, and pear trees set in the garden, and of walnuts in the adjoining croft. The sequel, however, was not quite in accord with the tranquillity that "the purest of all human pleasures" might seem to promise. On December 1, 1716, twenty years after the first arrival of the Wesleys at Epworth, the peace of the new home was effectually broken by the inauguration of a series of disturbances supposed to be supernatural.

The noises—there was more hearing than seeing—were multiform, or, at least, sounded differently to different ears. Sometimes they resembled "the dismal groans of one in extremes, at the point to die." At other times, the gobblings of a turkey-cock furnished a more accurate simile. When the visitant approached, the air was charged with Æolian music. The observers attained to a remarkable degree of precision in defining their impressions. A vivid description was that of a man mounting the stairs in jackboots, and trailing a nightgown after him.

To recount all the phenomena would be pleasant, but unscrupulous. Hardly any trick or device that could mystify the mind or work upon the feelings was omitted. The rector's characteristic knock "three-times-three" was mimicked, and one Sunday at dinner his trencher frolicked on the table. His daughter Nancy was sitting on a bed, when it was lifted repeatedly to a considerable height. Jumping off, she exclaimed, "Surely Old Jeffrey won't run away with me!"

"Old Jeffrey" was the nickname bestowed on the ghost, and, in course of time, when it was found that no harm resulted, the expression passed into a term of endearment. The younger children are in bed. They hear the soft tapping. But they are not frightened. They only say to each other, "Old Jeffrey is coming; it is time to go to sleep." And, to beat all, little Kezzy amuses herself by chasing the strange noises from room to room and stamping with her childish foot in order to attract a response.

Altogether, it was an extraordinary affair, and one that cannot be explained by credulity or superstition in the Wesleys. The rector began by scolding his children, but afterwards, by dint of experience, succumbed to their belief. The strong-minded Emilia, in a letter, delivers herself of the following remarks:—

"I am so far from being superstitious that I was too much inclined to infidelity, so that I heartily rejoice at having such an opportunity of convincing myself, past doubt or scruple, of the existence of some things besides those we see. A whole month was sufficient to convince anybody of the reality of the thing, and to try all ways of discovering any trick, had it been possible for any such to have been used."

What interpretation can be given of the events? To this question several answers have been returned. Southey very properly rejects ordinary and obvious explanations—rats, collusion, or legerdemain—as inadequate to the circumstances, and seeks repose in the famous intimation to Horatio—"There's more in heaven and earth than is dreamed of in your philosophy." Isaac Taylor favours the belief that the actors were neither good angels nor evil angels, but silly elemental spirits, like Queen Titania or Queen Mab, holding high holiday.

This is certainly a bold attempt to dispose of a problem that arises in connection with so many well-authenticated ghost stories—their apparently motiveless character. What is the use of ghosts "hanging around" in the way they so often do? Southey hints, to convince materialists of the existence of an invisible world. Perhaps. Emilia Wesley was "inclined to infidelity." On this assumption the Epworth fairies did their work well, and need not be called silly.

Coleridge takes quite another line, and interprets after this fashion. "What was it? Why, a contagious nervous disease, the acme or intensest form of which is catalepsy." Coleridge's opinion is entitled to profound respect, but this particular view strikes one as more feasible than probable, as an anodyne to lull perplexity and save trouble. It is very well to talk of catalepsy, but there could not have been much of catalepsy in Kezzy hilariously pursuing Mr. Ghost. Truly, it is a great crux.

The episode of Old Jeffrey's antics has been referred to at some length, because it helps to account for a notable trait in the character of John Wesley. The

eighteenth century prided itself on being an age of reason, and yet whole pages of John Wesley's *Journal* are filled with reports of special providences, apparitions, magic mirrors, and the like. Wesley was savingly convinced of witchcraft. With him, not to believe in witchcraft was to count yourself out of the number of true believers in the Bible.

What did John Wesley make of the Epworth mystery? Well, that excellent divine had a portable *deus* (or, rather, *diabolus*) *ex machina*, whose office it was to extricate him from all possible intellectual mazes and cataleptic nightmares. Whenever anything untoward happened, which a purely physiological interpretation would have ascribed to catalepsy or hysteria,—induced perhaps by his own oratory,—Wesley, nimbly surmounting secondary causes, flew to the prime author of that and every woe—to Satan. He did so in this instance.

Frankly, John Wesley believed that "Old Jeffrey" was a messenger of Satan, sent to buffet his father. It appears that Mrs. Wesley had declined to say Amen to the prayer for the king, and her husband, nettled by her refusal, had vowed to desert his family. According to John Wesley's hermeneutics the *raison d'être* of "Old Jeffrey" was to bring the Rev. Samuel Wesley to a proper frame of mind respecting that rash vow.

If the rector of Epworth had any important defect, it was harshness, imperiousness. He had the qualities of a martinet. One habit for which he has been generally commended was that of systematic pastoral visitation. He made the tour of his large parish, closely interrogating the members of his scattered flock

as to their state of mind. Probably Wesley was conscientious enough to present himself in this capacity, even more unpopular than that of tithe-collector, to all classes of his parishioners; but, commonly speaking, it is one of the burdens of the poor to have to endure the inquisitions of "callow clergymen" —Samuel Wesley distrusted "callow clergymen"— and fussy district visitors, anxious to certify that they are truly resigned to their numerous ills.

Samuel Wesley's style of intercourse aimed at what he calls "well-ordered familiarity." This clever phrase no doubt signified that he was, or tried to be, extremely pleasant to Jack, and Tom, and Dick, and Toby, but that he kept his place, and took care that they kept theirs. One sees a reflexion of this "well-ordered familiarity" in John Wesley's relations with his preachers. In his letters, and doubtless in his personal greetings, he addressed them as "Dear Sammy" and "Dear Billy," but let any of them—William Moore, for instance—show symptoms of independence, and Wesley writes of him as a castaway. The man's heart, he thinks, is not right with God.

At Epworth the parish clerk appears at times to have got out of hand. Indeed, it may be predicated of parish clerks as a body that they believed in themselves, and, in their official character, often served better as illustrations of familiarity than of good order. Did Samuel Wesley ever indulge his sense of humour at the expense of propriety? There is some doubt about this. It has been ascertained that Sternhold and Hopkins, execrable as was their metrical psalter, did not furnish opportunity for that possibly mythical dialogue, which, nevertheless, Adam Clarke

avers he received from Samuel Wesley's son. The minister having read,

"Like to an owl in an ivy-bush,"

his satellite, out of the recess of Mr. Wesley's late wig, is said to have responded with an approach to literal truth,

"That fearsome thing, am I."

However that may be, the worthy clerk did not stick at superseding "Grandsire Sternhold" in his own favour. One Sunday he celebrated King William's return to London by announcing in loud tones, "Let us sing to the praise and glory of God, a hymn of my own composing:

"King William is come home, come home,
King William home is come!
Therefore let us together sing
The hymn that's called *Te D'um.*"

The congregation at Epworth had "a strange genius at understanding nonsense," and, for the sake of peace and quietness, Samuel Wesley postponed his own liking for anthems and cathedral music to the taste of his parishioners. But he resolutely set himself to educate the people in music and morals, and at last had the gratification of witnessing a marked improvement in both these respects. When Dr. Clarke visited Epworth, he questioned the old folks about the father of the Wesleys, and found lingering among them the memory of a beloved and venerable clergyman, who had helped and instructed them in their youth. On the whole, Samuel Wesley seems to have justified the younger Samuel's description:

> "A parish priest—not of the pilgrim kind,
> But fixed and faithful to the post assigned—
> Through various scenes, with equal virtue trod,
> True to his oath, his order, and his God."

Mrs. Wesley thought her gifted husband thrown away on such a place as Epworth, and the fact that he was sent again and again to Convocation proves that he stood well in the estimation of his brother-clergy. But he never obtained higher preferment, and died in his country parish, April 25, 1735, at the age of seventy-two.

The exact number of his immediate descendants is somewhat doubtful. The rector himself speaks of "a numerous offspring, eighteen or nineteen children," but several died early. John Wesley describes his mother as serenely inditing letters, transacting business, and holding conversations in the midst of her *thirteen* children. But there must have been further gaps, as only ten—three sons and seven daughters—arrived at maturity. Of these John and Charles were the most conspicuous, but others of the family had strange, eventful histories, which might well occupy our attention. Samuel and Hetty, as poets, have a distinct claim to be remembered.

For one year after quitting his mother's side, and before going to school, Samuel had a tutor, one John Holland, "whose kindness," writes the rector to his son, "you bear on your knuckles." Holland was a rakish young clergyman, who had been turned out of thirteen posts, had ruined his father, and was probably employed by the Wesleys out of charity to his mother. The parson tells a weird story of this scapegrace.

"Your old schoolmaster was making homewards

about a month or six weeks since, and got within ten or a dozen miles of Epworth, where he fell sick out of rage or despair. He was taken home in a common cart, and has been almost mad ever since. Peter Foster, the Anabaptist preacher, gave him twopence to buy him some brandy, and thought he was very generous. His mother fell a-cursing God when she saw him. She has just been with me to beg the assistance of the parish for him. What think you of this example?"

Samuel entered Westminster School in 1704, at the age of fourteen. Mrs. Wesley, mindful perhaps of the "example," continued to watch over him. "Have a care," she writes. "Stay at the third glass. Consider you have an obligation to strict temperance which all have not—I mean your designation to holy orders." It was no doubt a great thing for both father and mother to see their firstborn son installed as a King's scholar, but it is clear that they were infinitely more concerned about his spiritual interests than about either his intellectual progress or his worldly advancement.

Westminster was then easily first of the English public schools, and abounded in old and inspiring associations. The dean, Thomas Sprat, conceived a high opinion of young Wesley, whom he drove with him to his country house at Bromley. The *protégé*, however, was not grateful for these attentions, and complained that they distracted him from study proper. "He has chosen me out of all the scholars that I should read books to him at night—hoarse and shortsighted me!"

In 1711 the burdensome old gentleman died, and

was succeeded by the celebrated Dr. Atterbury. The same year Samuel proceeded to Christ Church, Oxford, where, a true Wesley, he plunged into the Whistonian controversy regarding the "Ignatian Epistles." Having taken his degree, he was ordained and returned to Westminster as usher or third master.

Atterbury and he became fast friends, and as he was on easy terms with Edward Harley, Earl of Oxford, and with literary "stars,"—Pope and Prior, Addison and Swift,—Samuel Wesley doubtless anticipated a brilliant future. It never came. That friendship with Atterbury stood in the way of promotion, and for the rest of his life, and indeed after his death, Wesley laboured under the suspicion of Jacobitism. His daughter expressly affirmed that he was a Jacobite, but John Wesley as expressly denied the allegation, which he attributed to ignorance, to misconception of the family politics, and, above all, to confusion of the terms "Tory" and "Jacobite."

In a letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, December 24, 1785, the only surviving brother discusses the topic at large. He observes: "Most of those who gave him this title did not distinguish between a Jacobite and a Tory, whereby I mean, 'one that believes God, not the people, to be the origin of all civil power.' In this sense he was a Tory; so was my father; so am I. But I am no more a Jacobite than I am a Turk; neither was my brother. I have heard him over and over again disclaim that character."

Be that as it may, Samuel Wesley never attained what was perhaps the summit of his ambition. He never became Dean of Westminster. He never became even headmaster. After nearly twenty years spent

in that institution, he migrated to Blundell's School, Tiverton, where he felt himself in a "desert," and was vastly unpopular both in the school and in the town. A rhyming chronicle of the masters bans him as

"Curst with excessive pride."

The Wesleys, as we have seen, *were* proud. On the other hand, Samuel Wesley was an ideal character to fail in a country town. Endowed with taste and sensibility, and tenderly alive to the decencies of religion, he must have abhorred the usages of a place, where a gentleman-jockey was more a hero than himself, and the clergy were evidently so-so.[1]

Although he was so accomplished a scholar, Samuel Wesley's literary remains are all comprised in a slender volume of poems. His muse is part sacred, part satirical. Some of his hymns are sung to this day. His talent for satire may be inferred from his epigram on the cenotaph erected in Westminster Abbey, A.D. 1721, as a memorial of the creator of *Hudibras*:

"While Butler, needy wretch! was yet alive,
No generous patron would a dinner give;
See him, when starved to death and turn'd to dust,
Presented with a monumental bust!
The poet's fate is here in emblem shewn—
He asked for bread, and he received a stone."

[1] In 1751, twelve years after his brother had quitted, not only his "desert" in Devonshire, but earth's "howling wilderness," John Wesley visited Tiverton, and this is what he writes: "There was a sermon preached at the Old Church before the trustees of the school. At half an hour past twelve the morning service began, but such insufferable noise and confusion I never saw before in a place of worship—no, not even in a Jewish synagogue. The clergy set the example, laughing and talking during the greater part of the prayers and sermon."

Samuel Wesley died at Tiverton, in 1739, at the age of forty-nine; and a florid epitaph in St. George's Churchyard reminded, and reminds, town and gown of the many virtues of the dead schoolmaster.

Mehetabel, or Hetty, was the fourth and far the brightest of the septette of sisters. She was also her father's favourite. When only eight, she could read the Greek Testament with ease, but hours in the library did not take from her natural lightheartedness. She grew up a pretty girl, with charming ways, and lovers were legion. But, in a question of marriage, the Wesleys were not complaisant. Then it was Mother, then Brother John, who interfered, and, of course, the girls made wretched matches.

In Hetty's case, the Rev. Samuel Wesley himself non-suited. A member of the legal profession applied for her, and was candidly informed that he must wait until inquiries had been made as to his character. The result was unfavourable. The suitor was adjudged "an unprincipled lawyer," and his application rejected. What followed? Only this—Hetty left Epworth, and married a plumber and glazier of London, called Wright.

It has been mooted that this marriage was forced on Hetty by her father, but unless there was more in the case than has ever leaked out, he had no conceivable motive for adopting such a course. The man was poor; he was uneducated; and Hetty's uncle, who apparently did not mind *mésalliances*, enabled him to set up in business by a gift of five hundred pounds. The probability is that Hetty married him out of pique, and that her father knew nothing of the rash step until it was irrevocable.

Of course she was thoroughly miserable, but she made Wright a better wife than he deserved, and lavished her love upon him, just as if he were a king, or, perhaps, a saint. He was no saint. He spent his nights in public-houses, and the graceful poetess sought to recall him to his duty by warm expressions of conjugal devotion:

> "For though thine absence I lament,
> When half the lonely night is spent;
> Yet when the watch or early morn
> Has brought me hopes of thy return,
> I oft have wiped these watchful eyes,
> Concealed my cares, and curb'd my sighs,
> In spite of grief, to let thee see
> I wore an endless smile for thee."

Hetty lost all her children, killed, as she believed, by the white lead of her husband's trade; and, wailing one of her dying blossoms, she would gladly have shared its fate. When, at a later period, she was consoled in some measure by the ministrations of her brothers, she remarked with native impetuosity, "I have long ardently wished for death, because, you know, we Methodists always die in a transport of joy." But Hetty never realised this compensation. In 1750, when all London was in a frenzy through a succession of earthquakes, she passed away in darkness, doubt, and fear.

CHAPTER II

FIRST-FRUITS

Boyhood—At the Charterhouse—Interview with Dr. Sacheverell —Fellow of Lincoln—University Manners—The Name "Methodist"—The Holy Club—A Family Difference—Colonisation of Georgia—The Wesleys' Missionary Enterprise—A Great Storm—Intercourse with Moravians—Rough Quarters—The Hopkey Affair.

JOHN, the second son and seventh child of Samuel Wesley's "numerous offspring,"—of such "offspring," that is to say, as survived and can be accounted for,—was born on the 17th of June 1703. As a child, he was docile and obedient, and knew the Holy Scriptures. His mother taught him that the essence of religion lay in keeping the Commandments, and he kept them to such purpose that, when he was only eight, his father allowed him to communicate.

Even after conversion, John Wesley looked back to the first ten years of his life with considerable approval. He believed that, so far, he had not sinned away the washing of the Holy Ghost given him in baptism. It is true that he neither understood nor remembered what was said to him about inward obedience. He was ignorant of the true meaning of the law, and still more ignorant of the gospel of

Christ. But, as regards outward duties, he welcomed instruction, and that is pretty well for a boy under ten.

The next six or seven years were spent at school, and to this period of his life he looked back with some, though not utter, dissatisfaction. He neglected outward duties, and, though never involved in public scandal, committed outward sins. He had faulty ideas of the conditions of salvation, and he had a slight taint of Pharisaism, but he still read the Scriptures, still said his prayers, and that is pretty well for a boy under twenty.

Rising amid the cries of London, of which, in the eighteenth century, there was a handsome variety, stood a building which was at once a seminary for youth and a haven of repose for decayed single gentlemen. The master, or head of the pensioners—the now venerable Thomas Burnet—was not only a man of parts, but a man of character. Thirty years before, he had defied a Romanist king and a "hanging" judge—even Jeffreys. When Burnet died, as he did in 1715, he was succeeded by Dr. John King, of whom John Byrom, poet, writes in his Journal: "Went with Massey and Dr. King, Master of the Charterhouse, and one Mr. Nichols to the Horn Tavern; Dr. King had Thomas à Kempis always in his pocket." It is perhaps more than a coincidence that, at Oxford, John Wesley had, or thought he had, Thomas à Kempis, if not always, yet often in his pocket.

The headmaster of the school was Dr. Thomas Walker. An old gown-boy, he had received the appointment in 1679. It was a good appointment. The best Latin scholar of the day—Dr. Davies, President of Queen's College, Cambridge—was a pupil

of Walker's, and he must be allowed some credit in respect of a pair of famous essayists—Addison and Steele. The usher, another old gown-boy, was Dr. Andrew Tooke, Gresham Professor of Geometry, Fellow of the Royal Society, and author of the *Pantheon*, which, with its cargo of heathen gods, sailed through two-and-twenty editions. This versatile man succeeded Dr. Walker in the headmastership, but he had to wait. Addison's schoolmaster joined to his other qualifications that of firmness, and he stuck to his post till he was eighty-two.

Among Samuel Wesley's varied accomplishments was the useful art of "making interest." It is his own phrase for a practice in which he saw no sin and much sense. He "made interest" with Queen Mary, and got Epworth. He "made interest" with the Duke of Buckingham, and got his son John into the Charterhouse. The duke and duchess, between them, had subscribed £27, 17s. 6d. to repair the damage of the first Epworth fire—what I have called "the rehearsal." After the second fire, the rector, mindful of past benefits, considered it proper to send his Grace a particular account of the event. It was particular, among other reasons, inasmuch as it told all about poor Jacky and his marvellous escape from the flames, as recorded, in the very terms of the epistle, in the opening chapter of the present work. The adventure was no doubt well within the nobleman's recollection, when, in January 1714, he availed himself of his prerogative as Governor of the Charterhouse to nominate John Wesley as gown-boy.

Probably the years passed at school were the only years of his long and arduous career wherein Wesley

might have claimed genuine popularity. He was a thoroughly healthy boy, and, unlike Shelley, could submit to a certain amount of "fagging" and "bullying" without losing any of his spirit or morbidly fancying that the world was in arms against him. Wesley had not yet to encounter that most odious and intractable of adverse influences—Prejudice. He might have to accept, now and then, a cuff from a bigger boy; and the bigger boys made a point of helping themselves to the smaller boys' allowance of meat. But these attentions, shared by all in turn, did not sting. "From ten to thirteen or fourteen," he says, "I had little but bread to eat, and not plenty of that. I believe this was so far from hurting me that it laid the foundation of lasting health." His father had enjoined on him to run three times round the green every morning. This injunction he obeyed, and the systematic exercise, it is natural to suppose, assisted the enforced abstinence in building up an exceptionally tough constitution.

When Wesley became one of the bigger boys, he did not bully—he amused. Once Dr. Tooke had lost his flock, and could not tell where to find them. They had completely vanished from the fold, or playground. However, they were not doing much harm. They were in the schoolroom, and John Wesley was telling them stories. Tooke was delighted, and encouraged the narrator to tell more stories to more audiences.

Wesley's enemies twisted this straightforward anecdote into a dishonest legend. They declared that when Tooke asked him why he mixed with boys so much younger than himself, he made answer, "Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven." Let us dismiss

this reply as apocryphal, as a libel. Wesley was never, in any low or vulgar sense, ambitious. Ambition, however, has been defined as "the last infirmity of noble minds," and somehow this episode of school-life, with its suggestion of personal authority, irresistibly impresses you as a foretokening of the Holy Club, of the Yearly Conference, and of Wesley's life-long papacy among the people called Methodists.

The Charterhouse, in its rough way, had been kind to Wesley, and Wesley was devoted to the Charterhouse. In 1727 he was one of the stewards at the annual dinner of Old Carthusians. Later developments may have weakened the bond between school and scholar, but at heart Wesley was firm in his allegiance. In May 1764 he breakfasted with a Mr. Fielding, near Barnard Castle. "I found," he says, "we had been schoolfellows at the Charterhouse, and he remembered me, though I had forgot him." In 1768 there was another meeting. "I was well pleased to lodge at a gentleman's, an old schoolfellow, half a mile from the town. What a dream are the fifty or sixty years that have slipped away since we were at the Charterhouse!" Twenty years more, and the old schoolfellow and his wife had been laid to rest.

After Wesley had turned fifty, it was his custom to stroll through the Charterhouse once a year, comparing things present with things past. To many the comparison would have been sad, but it was not sad to Wesley, a gourmand for retrospect. Hence it was not, as Southey opines, a question of pressing on to the goal. It was a question of habitual serenity, enabling him to indulge in cheerful reflections.

In August 1757 he took a walk in the Charter-

house, and wondered that all the quadrangles and buildings, and especially the schoolboys, looked so small. "But this," he says, "is easily accounted for. I was little myself when I was at school, and measured all about me by myself." He goes on to suggest that this may be the reason why Homer, and Virgil, and many other persons of less note, have imagined that men in former ages were larger and stronger than those of the present generation. Yes, or there may have been a notion that very tall men represent the normal growth, just as centenarians have been said to represent the normal span of life. Anyhow, Wesley's desultory reflections are very happy—much better than melancholy discourse about hopes, and illusions, and ambitions, which, as a boy, he had probably been too sensible to entertain. That was the worst of Wesley—he was always *so sensible*. Now people in general are not sensible, and revel in inconsistencies.

From the Charterhouse Wesley proceeded to Christ Church, Oxford. This was in 1720, so that he was still a mere boy—in fact, seventeen. With reference to his youth, Alexander Knox, an Irish friend of later days, tells an amusing story of Samuel Wesley's fruitless attempt to initiate his son into the prudent parental art of "making interest."

"I remember Mr. Wesley told us that his father was the person who composed the well-known speech delivered by Dr. Sacheverell at the close of his trial;[1] and that on this ground when he, Mr. John Wesley, was about to be entered at Oxford, his father, knowing that the doctor had a strong interest in the college for which his son was devoted, desired him to call on the

[1] Atterbury has usually the credit of this achievement.

doctor on his way to get letters of recommendation. 'When I was introduced,' said Mr. John Wesley, 'I found him alone, as tall as a maypole, and as fine as an archbishop. I was a very little fellow, not taller (pointing to a very gentlemanlike but very dwarfish clergyman who was in the company) than Mr. Kennedy there. He said: "You are too young to go to the university; you cannot know Latin and Greek yet. Go back to school." I looked at him as David looked at Goliath, and despised him in my heart. I thought, "If I do not know Greek and Latin better than you, I ought to go back to school indeed."[1] I left him, and neither entreaties nor commands could have again brought me back to him.'"

Brave words! But one wonders what his wise father thought of the woeful waste of opportunity. Your great men, your Sacheverells must have their say, but their say is often only the preface to deeds of genuine kindness. However, the sequel proved that Sacheverell was wrong—hopelessly and entirely wrong. Wesley succeeded brilliantly, and, with the help of Dr. Wigan, made such good progress that, at twenty-one, an observer could say of him: "He appeared the very sensible and acute logician; a young fellow of the finest classical taste, of the most liberal and manly sentiments."

And the University appreciated his talents. In March 1726 he gained a fellowship at Lincoln; and in the following November he was appointed lecturer in Greek and moderator of the classes. He was even now only twenty-three, and had not yet taken his Master's

[1] The Wesleys were a scholarship-winning family, and Christ Church was a kind of freehold for them.

degree. Dr. Sacheverell must have been scandalised, but Wesley's old father was overjoyed. "What will be my own fate before the summer be over, God knows; *sed passi graviora.* Wherever I am, my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln."

Readers of Gibbon's *Autobiography* will be prepared for a not too favourable estimate of the Oxford of the eighteenth century. The Magdalen drones, however, were perhaps not the worst enemies of studious youth. Men like Tom Warton, who was at once poet-laureate, professor of history, and *bon vivant*, lured many an undergraduate from the thorny path of application by the temptations of good dinners, anniversaries, music meetings, and expeditions to Wallingford, Woodstock, and London. Instead of fixing their minds on law, physick, or divinity, the tyros wasted their energy in the purest dissipations. If any of their number had succeeded in interpreting a black-letter inscription, it was a subject for sincere felicitation, and justified a week's dispensation from mental toil. In Tom Warton's rooms they discussed, with Tom as umpire, which college excelled in long corks, or had a cook best qualified for serving up harrico of mutton or hashed calf's head. When the nectar had been exchanged for gall, and the rosy visions had been replaced by the cold world, plenty of John Hollands might have been found lamenting the brief spell of Elysium.

According to Wesley's account of Lincoln, the Fellows were at least gentlemen. They were perfectly satisfied with one another. They were good-natured, well-bred, and "admirably disposed to preserve peace and good neighbourhood among themselves," and

"to promote it wherever else they had acquaintance." That being the case, they were easily led to discountenance those who by their conduct tacitly censured their neighbours. Mr. Smith did this. He husbanded time, retrenched unnecessary expenses, and shunned irreligious acquaintance. And he was treated as a Guy Fawkes. "The thing that gives offence here is the being singular with regard to time, expense, and company." Precisely; you will never get on in society if you make your behaviour a reproach to those amongst whom you move.

Wesley, like Esaias, was very bold. The Fellows had elected him one of themselves in the teeth of sundry hints that he was unsuitable; and some years before poor Mr. Smith developed those unwelcome traits, they must have been convinced of their mistake. Not only was Wesley a perfect Spartan in discipline, requiring his pupils to rise betimes and adapt themselves to a rigid code of rules, but he had imbibed notions that threatened the very foundations of social life. If the Fellows did not serve Wesley as they served Smith, it was because they knew that they might as well dash themselves against adamant. When once his mind was made up, not all the bishops in England could move him. Ostracism, the certain punishment of stubborn eccentricity, had no terrors for a man who confessed that, unless people were of a religious turn of mind, he was much better pleased without them.

Charles Wesley, younger than John by five years, had been educated at Westminster under his brother Samuel. He, too, found his way to Christ Church. Here, for the first two or three terms, he closed his

ears to fraternal remonstrance and gave himself up to frivolity. In 1727 John, who had taken deacon's orders, temporarily withdrew from Oxford and resided, as his father's curate, at Wroote. Dr. Morley, however, the head of his college, could not dispense with his services, and in November 1729 he was again at Lincoln.

By this time Charles had undergone a succession of changes. From frivolity he had passed to study, from study to reflection, and from reflection to weekly participation of the sacrament. In this exemplary practice he had induced two or three other students to join him, and from the strict observance of religious duties combined with a scrupulous regard for the statutes of the university, had gained, as he says, "the harmless name of Methodist."

If Charles Wesley intended by this statement that the nickname was new and good-natured, he was under a sad delusion. His brother, in his account of the word, traces it to an ancient school of physicians, of whom few, very few, have heard. It might be unfair to condemn this pedigree as historical affectation, but it is certain that the Wesleys never liked the name, and accepted it for convenience.

The truth seems to be that "Methodist" was then, as now, a term of reproach among persons of contrary or no religious principle, and both trend and ancestry are sufficiently indicated in a Lambeth sermon of 1639. In this discourse the question is propounded: "Where are now our Anabaptists, and plain, pack-staff Methodists, who esteem all flowers of rhetoric no better than stinking weeds, and all elegancies of speech no better than profane spells?" At the close

of the same century, a section of Nonconformists, holding similar views of justification to those afterwards embraced by Wesley, were styled by their co-religionists "New Methodists."

Now it is very strange if the Wesleys, with their Nonconformist connections, possessed no acquaintance with these facts. They need not have known the Lambeth sermon, but they might have been expected to know the associations of their own sobriquet. But, if they did, why that uncandid reference to the ancient physicians? After all, it may be that the information, obvious as it may now seem, had somehow eluded them. John Wesley, in his *Short History of Methodism*, certainly describes the term as new and quaint, and attributes to a Christ Church man its application to the Oxford coterie.

Popular ignorance played all kinds of pranks with the name. The usual abbreviation was "Methody," but it was sometimes confounded with "Maccabee." Its meaning also was obscure. In Ireland a gentleman defined Methodists as "people who placed all religion in wearing long beards."

Although Charles Wesley may be considered the first Methodist in point of time, he was not, or not for long, the first Methodist in point of importance. John Wesley possessed in a marked degree what Charles Wesley possessed only in a moderate degree—will; and, as the necessary result, he took the control of the society which Charles had instituted. There were at first only four of them—the two Wesleys, Morgan of Christ Church, and Kirkman of Merton. After a year, they were reinforced by others, among whom were James Hervey, not yet author of *Medita-*

tions among the Tombs, George Whitefield, and John Gambold.

The original design was to read over the classics on three or four evenings of the week, and on Sunday some work on divinity; but John Wesley was already in process of becoming, as he afterwards boasted he had become, a man of one book. It seems that Morgan commenced the religious practices that occasioned so much talk, but the predominance of the Wesleys, and especially of John Wesley, was unquestioned. According to Gambold, Charles had a real deference for his brother, and submitted to him in a way that seemed hardly credible in such near relations. "Could I describe one of them," he says, "I should describe both." Though John Wesley was of unassuming demeanour, Gambold thought he had something of authority in his countenance. Charles, on the other hand, was affable and amiable. He was "a man formed for friendship."

Whatever credit may be due to Charles Wesley and to Morgan as pioneers—Morgan, alas! was to die young—John Wesley alone could have been chief. Not only had he the advantage in age, in academic studies, and in general knowledge, but for some years he had been unconsciously ripening for the part. On quitting Christ Church for Lincoln he had "shaken off all his trifling acquaintance"—without, of course, consulting the pacific and sociable Fellows—and had taken to reading the *Imitation of Christ,* ascribed to Thomas à Kempis, Jeremy Taylor's *Rules of Holy Living and Dying,* and William Law's *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call.*

At a later period he saw much to criticise in one

and all of these works. Even then he was not quite satisfied with his oracles. One rule—"We must be sure, in some sense or other, to think ourselves the worst in every company where we come"—seemed to him impracticable. Another rule—"Whether God has forgiven us or no, we know not; therefore be sorrowful for ever having sinned"—not merely contradicted other portions of the treatise, but contained highly disputable doctrine. John Wesley was striving to keep the whole law of God, both inwardly and outwardly, and whilst he did that, he deemed himself in a state of salvation. But for Jeremy Taylor, it is conceivable that Wesley would never have doubted that he was in a state of salvation, and that the doctrine of assurance, in the extremely narrow and highly technical sense that Wesley imparted to it, would never have perplexed English minds philosophical or lay.

A lesson that Wesley learnt from Taylor was the "wisdom of flight." The mastership of a school in Yorkshire chanced to be vacant, and Wesley thought of applying for it. The school was charmingly situated in a secluded vale, where Nature and Nature's God might have been enjoyed without expense. Had this nebulous idea taken definite shape, the secluded vale would have been to Wesley what the wilderness was to his prototype—a place of preparation. For Baptists and Methodists—men of intense activity—there is one, and only one, possible sphere—the world. For Wesley the world continued to be Oxford.

Defective as his manuals of devotion might have been, they had revealed to Wesley the "exceeding height, and breadth, and depth" of the law of God.

That majestic law he and his companions tried hard to obey. They not only prayed, but fasted, and as they regularly attended Holy Communion, they were styled by mirthful critics "Sacramentarians." This name was afterwards altered to "The Holy Club," probably to suit the widening circle of duty to which the members of the society felt themselves drawn. When the circle had extended to the utmost limit of which Merton and Christ Church could conceive, "The Holy Club" became "The Reforming Club; or, The Enthusiasts." In the eighteenth century—that age of reason—when a man had been called an "enthusiast," he could be called nothing worse. He had sounded the lowest depth of obloquy.

But the ugly epithet was unmerited. The Bible-moths no doubt took a strict, and even appalling, view of their religious obligations. The state of being always "recollected" is the very crown and pinnacle of asceticism; but, if practicable at all, can be attained, and perhaps better, without enthusiasm. Nor in his external actions did Wesley and his associates transgress the bounds of strict churchmanship. If, inspired by Mr. Morgan's example, they visited the felons at the Castle, they first consulted the chaplain. If they preached to them once a month, they first got leave of the bishop. Poor families, incarcerated debtors, and "beardless freshmen" were the care of the Holy Club, which freely disbursed both money and advice. The members supported also a school for neglected children, whom they helped to clothe.

Their abundant labours were rewarded with scant esteem, and at Merton the Bible-moths were ridiculed for customs not their own. Wesley took this pleasantry

to heart; and, being unable to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, wrote to his father and eldest brother for counsel. The septuagenarian, who, whilst in residence at Oxford, had himself visited the prisoners, bade him not be discouraged. "I hear my son John has the honour of being styled the 'Father of the Holy Club.' If it be so, I am sure I must be the grandfather of it, and I need not say that I had rather any of my sons should be so dignified and distinguished than to have the title of 'his Holiness.'" The younger Samuel was equally emphatic.

However, the proceedings of the Holy Club occasioned increasing scandal. Morgan had, it was alleged, died from excessive fasting, and for a time his relations were disposed to charge their bereavement on Wesley. Private persons employed both violence and persuasion to arrest the mania for Communion. The authorities at Merton held a private conclave to stem the tide of enthusiasm, and there was ominous talk of the censors "blowing up" the Godly Club. These measures were not without effect. During Wesley's absence in the north the communicants at St. Mary's dwindled from seven-and-twenty to five.

Some echo of the scandal seems to have reached Epworth; and, in 1731, Wesley's old father, having journeyed to London, deemed it well to extend his travels to Oxford, in order that he might investigate matters on the spot. He appears to have satisfied himself that there was no justification for the outcry, and, on returning to London, wrote to Mrs. Wesley that he had been well repaid for his trouble "by the shining piety of our sons."

He was not, however, so impressed with the import-

ance of their labours as to consider that they ought to entail any considerable sacrifice on the part of his family and himself. He was past the allotted span of life, and had made no provision for his wife and unmarried daughters. He therefore requested John to terminate his Oxford career, and "make interest" that he might succeed to the living of Epworth. Other relations urged the same course, and his brother Samuel attempted to work on his sense of duty by pointing out that he was bound by his ordination vows to seek the cure of souls. John was deaf to all appeals. He thought that, if he left Oxford, it would be at the peril of his soul. There he could train future clergymen, and that, it seemed to him, was his mission.

Southey says of John Wesley's part in the correspondence that it was not "creditable to his judgment," but there was no supreme reason why he should go to Epworth, and, in point of fact, his sister's husband, John Whitelamb, obtained the preferment. This is really one of those cases that test the judgment of the biographer. If Wesley had been of less importance to the world, it might have been objected that he had no right to disregard the commands of his venerable father. But the man who is to achieve great things for humanity will at times find himself face to face with contingencies, in which he will have to risk the appearance of ungraciousness, and even worse, or allow his whole course to be wrecked. John Wesley's main characteristic was moral courage. He had a stupendous task, and his Taskmaster no doubt absolved him for declining the unreasonable demand of his friends. Some soreness there may—indeed, must—have been, but the refusal caused no breach in the

almost unearthly rectitude of the family relations. In April 1735 the old rector died. His sons, John and Charles, were with him at the close, and, just before his departure, John pronounced the commendatory prayer. His father replied, "Now you have done all," and imperceptibly his soul glided out into the ocean of eternity.

The year 1732 was marked by a new settlement in America. Primarily this was the work of James Oglethorpe, a member of the British House of Commons, whose heart had been moved by the sufferings of poor debtors. It seemed to him terrible that men of character should drag out a miserable existence in filthy jails, to which they had been committed as the penalty of youthful imprudence or defective judgment; and he set himself to provide for derelict Britons a new chance in the New World.

But there were others who claimed Oglethorpe's sympathy hardly less than his own afflicted countrymen. These were the persecuted Protestants of mid-Europe. Long before Luther had affixed his theses to the gates of the castle-church at Wittenberg, the compatriots of Hus had kept alight in Moravia and Bohemia the torch of evangelical doctrine. Since the sixteenth century, however, they had encountered many difficulties. Outwardly they had been compelled to conform to the dominant religion. They had been subjected to intermittent persecution. Many of them had migrated to Saxony, where, however, they enjoyed no sense of security. Oglethorpe saw in these simple-hearted Germans excellent material for colonists, and offered them home and freedom beyond the sea.

The offer had been eagerly accepted. The evacua-

tion of Salzburg, whence some of them had come, had been signalised by incidents savouring rather of romance than of sober history. At least they appear to have little in common with the eighteenth century. The extended line of pilgrims, afoot, and chanting hymns along the way, full of faith and enthusiasm—the welcoming by the clergy at Leipsic, and by the university at Wittenberg—and the burst of gratitude when the exiles found themselves on the broad bosom of the Atlantic, their faces tinged by the rays of the setting sun—there is something in these episodes that recalls mediæval customs, if indeed we do not prefer the analogy of the previous century, when the embers of the Great Reformation still glowed in the breasts of the Puritans, and on the deck of the *Mayflower*.

In 1734 Oglethorpe visited England in order to enlist further sympathy for his enterprise. On his return he carried with him John and Charles Wesley. Do not suppose that John Wesley, who dared not quit Oxford for Epworth, sailed without scruple to the virgin colony in the West. At first he flatly declined, but, on the advice of John Byrom and William Law, both personal acquaintances, he resigned himself to the task of converting the heathen. The project excited much ridicule, and was regarded as an additional proof of mental instability. "What is this, sir?" cried a wise man. "Are you turned Quixote, too? Will nothing serve you but to encounter windmills?" Such was the view taken of Christian missions in the year of grace 1736.[1]

Wesley's sojourn in America cannot be accounted,

[1] This is the more remarkable, as the Wesleys went out under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

even by his most fervid admirers, a satisfactory chapter of his career. He set out with high hopes, and in less than two years he came back, baffled and, to some extent, in disgrace. Still those two years were not unimportant. They brought him in contact with the Moravians, and the Moravians, as Wesley was led to believe, possessed the true key of Christianity. He was first struck with the difference between their religion and his own on the outward voyage, when there arose a succession of storms. The third—what the Greeks might have called an enlarged τριτυμία—was the worst. The ship rocked to and fro, and every ten minutes the stern or side of the vessel received such a shock that it seemed a miracle the planks still held together. The storm began at noon, and at seven was still raging. Wesley now paid a visit to his friends, the Germans. They had given the last proofs of their Christian humility. An opportunity had now arrived for testing their Christian fortitude. They well sustained the ordeal. The sea broke over the ship, split the mainsail, and poured in between the decks. The English began to scream; the Germans, who had just entered on their vespers, continued singing. Wesley could not but contrast the firmness of the Moravians with the agitation of his own countrymen. Personally, he does not seem to have been much afraid, but he owns to a certain "unwillingness to die," which he thought was indicative of want of faith.

The emigrants landed at a desert island opposite that of Tybee, and, led by Oglethorpe, ascended some rising ground, where they knelt down and gave thanks for their safe voyage. Oglethorpe then proceeded by boat to Savannah, the wooden capital of Georgia. On

his return he was accompanied by a Mr. Spangenberg, a Moravian pastor, and to this Protestant confessor Wesley—always insatiable of advice, which, however, he did not always follow—confided his perplexities. The incident was dramatic, but apparently barren.

"He said, 'My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?' I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, 'Do you know Jesus Christ?' I paused, and said, 'I know He is the Saviour of the world.' 'True,' replied he, 'but do you know He has saved you?' I answered, 'I hope He has died to save me.' He only added, 'Do you know yourself?' I said, 'I do.' But I fear they were vain words."

The note of hesitancy discernible in these words may be explained by the novelty of the catechism. Wesley had never before been subjected to so pointed an examination, and recoiled before an inquisitor to whom such questions and answers were the veriest commonplace. For the present his assumption that he was a true Christian remained intact, as was proved by an energy of ministerial labour unsurpassed even by the unflagging exertions of his later life. The belief that he was not only a true Christian, but a true Christian priest, caused him to act magisterially towards those very Moravians whose practical superiority he had recognised in the hour of trial. Afterwards he deemed this conduct strange and censurable. "What a truly Christian piety and simplicity breathe in these lines! And yet this very man, when I was at Savannah, did

I refuse to admit to the Lord's Table, because he was not baptized."

The Wesleys had gone to America for the conversion of the heathen, but the Creeks, the Choctaws, the Cherokees, and others representing that vast and benighted portion of humanity, saw extremely little of the brothers. Soon after their arrival they found their services in demand for the assemblage of cosmopolitan whites. John remained at Savannah, whilst Charles, who had likewise taken orders, went on to Frederica.

The charter of the new colony expressly forbade the importation of ardent spirits, and the aim of the trustees, and especially of the governor, was to render Georgia a model province. But, in spite of the prohibition of gin and papists, and the presence of a goodly leaven of Moravians, profligate men invaded the transatlantic Eden, where they engaged in smuggling and other vicious practices. All this they compassed to the horror of the virtuous and sensitive Charles Wesley, who appears to have had more than his fair share of adventurers. Perhaps they did not really pretend or attempt to shoot him in the myrtle grove, but it is evident that they worked on his fears, and at length his brother, who was made of sterner stuff, undertook to relieve him.

John Wesley was capable of anything. He preached in English to the English, in French to the French, in Italian to the Italians, in German to the Germans. He learnt Spanish that he might preach in that language to peninsular Jews. He could, and did, converse with learned Moravians in Latin. That he might not encroach on the working-day, he conducted

services before and after the hours of labour. He visited the sick. He catechised children. He rebuked profane swearing in His Majesty's officers.

He thus devoted himself to the duties of his sacred office, and left colonial politics to General Oglethorpe and the other patrons, who, in accordance with their motto, *non sibi, sed aliis*, decided what was for the good of the settlers. Bancroft, the historian of the United States, has remarked that Wesley desired and exerted no influence in moulding the institutions of Georgia. "As he strolled through natural avenues of palmettoes and evergreen hollies, and woods sombre with hanging moss, his heart gushed forth in addresses to God—

> 'Is there a thing beneath the sun,
> That strives with Thee my heart to share?
> Ah, tear it thence, and reign alone—
> The Lord of every motion there.'"

Wesley's residence in America was terminated by a painful—not to say, discreditable—incident. He was drawn into a queer sort of love affair with a fine girl, who, according to some versions, played the part of temptress to Wesley's St. Anthony. The lady was a Miss Hopkey, niece of a leading storekeeper and justice of the peace, called Causton; and she manifested a desire to amend her life under Wesley's tuition. Wesley asked nothing better. He interested himself, not only in Miss Sophy's spiritual health, but, anticipating his latter craze for physicking, in her bodily health as well. "In the beginning of December," he writes, "I advised Miss Sophy to sup earlier, and not immediately before she went to bed. She did so, and on this little circumstance, what an inconceivable train

of consequences depend! Not only all the colour of remaining life for her, but perhaps my happiness too."

Notwithstanding so much solicitude, the parties never became betrothed, but there was an understanding—not perhaps formally expressed, but still sufficiently binding—that, in due course, Miss Hopkey would be transformed into Mrs. Wesley. It is probable that the union would have taken place—Mr. Causton, at all events, would have raised no objection—but for Mr. Delamotte. This gentleman, one of Wesley's friends who had shared the voyage from England, either turned amiable Paul Pry or acquired, without having sought it, information that caused him to suspect the purity of Miss Sophy's motives. He arrived at the conclusion that her professions were hollow, that she was neither more nor less than a designing woman, whose society would have the worst results on Wesley's interests both here and hereafter. He communicated his fears to the artless lover, and inquired whether it was his intention to marry her.

Wesley was inexpressibly shocked, and repaired to the Moravian bishop for advice. The dignitary replied that, in the abstract, marriage was not unlawful, but it was a question whether such a marriage as Wesley had contemplated was quite expedient. He promised to lay the case before the elders. Now the Moravians were a plain, primitive people, not distinguished for delicacy of feeling, and they were the last body in the world to sympathise with Miss Sophy's little coquetries. Their verdict was unfriendly. Upon this Wesley tacitly forsook his lady-love. He did not acquaint her with the decision which had been, as it were, forced upon him—"his wound was great because it was so

small"—but his ardour was not what it had been. He was guilty of a coolness which the lady could not but remark, and she showed her sense of his conduct by marrying, not many months after, a Mr. Williamson.

One's sympathies go out to Miss Sophy. She had sought to adapt herself, as far as any woman ever could, to the whims of a spiritual Quixote, and all that she had gained by conscientious self-denial was to find herself the mark for the prosy criticism of a quorum of pietists, mature, staid, incapable of making allowances. Wesley's behaviour was abominable. He had won the girl's confidence, and all the Moravians in the world could not absolve him from the obligation of the unwritten pact, the unspoken vow.[1] He professed to feel the blow keenly, but he had no right to make Miss Sophy's peccadilloes an excuse for self-imposed penance. The best apology that can be offered for his vacillation is this—that he was deficient in primary human instinct. His brother Samuel knew something of his capabilities as a lover. When he learnt that the match was "off," he expressed regret, "for," said he, "you are unlikely to find another."

But worse was to follow. Not content with disappointing Miss Sophy, he must cast a slur on Mrs. Williamson by constituting himself a severe censor of her morals. Now that she was lawfully married, Mrs. Williamson's morals might have been deemed a matter rather for her husband's concern than for Wesley's. Wesley, however, ministered at the altar, and, as the rubric expressly required him to "advertise"

[1] Miss Hopkey, however, alleged that Wesley made her a definite offer, and was willing to go a long way in meeting her objections. Wesley's own statements are rather vague.

notorious and evil livers against coming to the Lord's Table, he informed his late inamorata that, without proof of contrition, she could not be admitted to the sacred rite. He concluded a series of technicalities by actually repelling her from Holy Communion.

Naturally, Mr. Williamson was furious, and prosecuted Wesley for defaming his wife's character. The legal incidents, though Wesley makes the best of them, attest his unpopularity in the colony. An effort was made to include in the indictment a number of other counts. Eventually they were struck out, but the effect, and perhaps the intention, of the proceedings was to convince Wesley that, for him, Georgia was no longer habitable. He accepted the situation, and defiantly departed.

Wesley's apologists—for example, the Rev. Richard Watson—are forced to allow that, in treating Mrs. Williamson as he did, he was neither prudent nor courteous. There can be no question of that. Whether he was influenced by jealousy or revenge is a point on which opinions will differ. Probably he was not. But, as a matter of tact, of good taste and good feeling, he was much to blame in selecting for public opprobrium the woman whom he had lately thought of for his wife. Nor can he be acquitted of a grave lack of common sense in suddenly reviving forgotten ecclesiastical usages, the exercise of which, outside the pale of the Moravians, was bound to convey a far more serious stigma than Wesley himself either contemplated or desired. Yet the retrospect was not displeasing! He had lost Miss Sophy. He had converted no large percentage of heathens. But he had benefited his own soul, and he was happily devoid of any sense of humiliation.

CHAPTER III

APOSTLESHIP

The Fear of Death—Peter Böhler—Justification by Faith—John Gambold—Hell—Methodist Type of Conversion—Wesley and Manzoni compared—24th May 1738—Rudeness to William Law—Montaigne's Three Orders—The Church of England—Adventures of Bishop Wilson—Non-Residence—Dissent—Religion at Zero—The Apostle of England—Visit to Germany.

THE scene now changes to London. The image of Miss Sophy had been effaced from his heart, and Wesley's mind was centred on his own perilous state before God. He had a decided faculty for introspection, as well as a decided fondness for psychological stock-taking. The observation made during the outward voyage, now that he had once more leisure from amorous distractions and ministerial responsibilities, returned upon him with full force. He felt that he wanted faith, that he wanted salvation, that he wanted peace—peace in life and death. "I went to America to convert the Indians, but, oh! who shall convert *me*? Who is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well, nay, and believe myself, while no danger is present, but let death look me in the face, and my

spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain.'

> 'I have a sin of fear that, when I've spun
> My last thread, I shall perish on the shore.'"

A stickler in such matters might be disposed to find fault with the quotation, in which the connection between spinning a thread and perishing on the shore is, to say the least, not pressingly obvious. Perhaps a reminiscence of Clotho, first of the Fates, is the missing link. Anyhow, there is no difficulty in allowing that Wesley might have been happier in his poetical excursus.

Be the poetry what it may, there can be no dispute as to the drift of the passage. Wesley feared death, and since he feared death, he suspected that his faith was vain, that he was yet in his sins. That his faith might have been more robust, more vivid, may be conceded, but it seems hardly reasonable to treat the fear of death as an absolute test of religion. This feeling is deep-rooted, widespread. In the opening scene of the *Alcestis* Euripides introduces a characteristic dialogue between Apollo and Death. The King of Terrors gloats over his promised victim—the devoted wife who, alone of his relations, was willing to die for Admetus. The sacrifice is all the more precious because the substitute is young, and Death, in pitilessly rejecting Apollo's intercession, observes grimly:

> "Who might would buy grey heads to die for them."

And Wesley was not very old.

The fear of death is, in fact, an ordinance of Nature, conjointly with the instinct of reproduction, for the preservation of the species, and exists *potentially* in

the ratio of mental and physical health. Courage may be defined as the quality that enables one to banish the thought of death at a moment when its presence would be inconvenient, and, perhaps, fatal. But no amount of courage can reconcile the full enjoyment of life with easy acquiescence in its negation.

This fact has been well understood by preachers and moralists, who counsel extreme moderation in earthly pleasures, if not entire abstinence from them, as the sole remedy for what they are pleased to term the "sin of fear." In his *Practical Discourse concerning Death*, which was first published in 1689, and of which there were at least twenty editions, Dean Sherlock begins a fine peroration with the words: "The only way to cure this fear of death is to mortify all remains of love and affection for this world, to withdraw ourselves as much as may be from the conversation of it, to use it very sparingly and with great indifferency." This is, indeed, the principle of the cloister—inoculation. You grow resigned to death, because you have anticipated its effects. In imagination you have passed, not once, nor twice, but many times, within the veil. The Unseen has become for you a home, an abiding-place.

Besides a natural and wholesome fear of death, common to most men, there is also a morbid fear, which seems to have afflicted, *inter alios*, Dr. Johnson. But Wesley's sentiment, it is safe to aver, was wholesome. He was in possession of good health. His faculties were keen. There was plenty to do in the world. If he was unwilling, and even afraid, to die, he was not of necessity devoid of faith. The truth is that religious people are apt to identify natural feelings with spiritual emotions. And sometimes they

make grave mistakes. When the Life of Dr. Pusey appeared, a reviewer suggested that the depression of which that great leader complained, and for which he punished himself with a hair shirt, was really the sensation of lost youth. Pusey himself did not comprehend his malady—exhaustion of spirits—but that, it was thought, was the root of the evil. This feature often makes the journals of religious people—not Wesley's *Journals*—painful, and even repellent. The writers are for ever accusing themselves of faults that belong to change and decay, to climate and to weather.

Nature, however, is bountiful. If she deals a wound, she also provides a salve. If she sows the bane, she makes to rise with it the antidote. In the life of man the consolations of religion are always open. When human resources fail, the victims of circumstance, the thralls of conscience, may repair to the Great Physician. But in these contingencies Providence not seldom resembles Nature. The demand creates the supply. The Great Physician has His deputies. Is Saul of Tarsus incapacitated—blinded by the exceeding brightness of the vision? Ananias is commissioned to attend him, and the scales fall from his eyes. In the same manner, when John Wesley's confidence departed, when his prayers, his fasts, his communions seemed worthless, and he sighed for peace, Peter Böhler, as though despatched for the purpose, arrived in London from Germany, and furnished the desired boon.

Peter Böhler—whom Tyerman, with irritating persistency, calls Bohler—was a young man of twenty-six, who had studied at the University of Jena, and had afterwards cast in his lot with the Moravians. The

year before he had been consecrated bishop by Count Zinzendorf, and was prepared to employ the powers entrusted to him for the benefit of sincere candidates, whether German or English. His ultimate destination, however, was America.

The German bishop was a real father in God to his audience in London, and soon the Moravians seem to have looked upon him as an inspired genius or as endued with a double portion of the Spirit. His addresses were given in Latin, but a learned tailor called Viney acted as interpreter, and the effects were very striking. The Wesleys, having met Böhler at the house of a Dutch merchant, rendered him such services as his position in a strange land appeared to require. John Wesley procured him lodgings. Charles Wesley taught him English. By way of return, Peter Böhler taught both John and Charles Wesley the meaning of faith. In a letter to Zinzendorf he diagnosed their case as follows:—The elder was a good-natured man, who knew that he did not properly believe on the Saviour, and was willing to be taught, while the younger was very much distressed in mind, but did not know how he should begin to be acquainted with the Saviour.

What was the difficulty? There was the rub—there was *no* difficulty. Had there been a difficulty the Englishmen would have mastered it, but the ease and simplicity of the thing baffled them. Although their belief was only of a general description, they could not divest themselves of the notion that they believed already, and that their belief must be expressed in practice. The result was that they were at heart very miserable. Böhler

taught them that intellectual assent was not sufficient, that faith was an affair of the heart, that faith alone was necessary to salvation.

The Moravians held also that the change from a mere formal belief, or intellectual assent, to real faith was instantaneous, and that this real faith, the operation of a moment, was the reception of the divine impress, transfiguring the whole nature. If a simile may be taken from the popular art of photography, it was as if the human soul were a film completely shrouded in gloom. For a fraction, and only a fraction, of a second the film is bared to the light. But during that brief exposure the nature of the film has been radically altered. Properly treated, it is now capable of reproducing in countless exemplars the beauty of which it was the passive recipient. Just as the film is "sensitised," so the human soul must be rendered tender and responsive; and, as in the case of the film, there must be complete passivity. There can be no question of works.

That was the doctrine which Böhler taught the Wesleys, and the Wesleys accepted. John Wesley did indeed afterwards differ from the Moravians concerning the importance of works. He did not think works absolutely negligible. But he agreed that works were in no sense a condition precedent to salvation. Theoretically, he had always held that view, but, in the strenuous discharge of duty, he had no doubt made an idol of work, and so, perhaps half-unconsciously, of works.

In the heyday of his Oxford sacramentarianism, Wesley was certainly not miserable. Gambold says of that period, "I could say a great deal of his private

piety, how it was nourished by a continual recourse to God, and preserved by a strict watchfulness in beating down pride and reducing the craftiness and impetuosity of nature to a childlike simplicity, and in a good degree crowned with divine love and victory over the whole set of earthly passions. He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of countenance that was next to shining."

Even so recently as January 1738 he had written in his *Journal*: "From this day I had no more of that fearfulness and heaviness, which before almost continually weighed me down. I am sensible that one who thinks the being *in orco*, as they phrase it, an indispensable preparation for being a Christian, would say I had better have continued in that state; and that this unseasonable relief was a curse, not a blessing. Nay, but who art thou, O man, who, in favour of a wretched hypothesis, thus blasphemest the good gift of God? Hath not He Himself said, 'This also is the gift of God, if a man have power to rejoice in his labour.' Yea, God setteth His own seal to his weak endeavours, while he thus 'answereth him in the joy of his life.'"

Wesley, however, had always suffered an amount of unrest through speculation. Jeremy Taylor had perplexed him with his heroic version of humility and his counsel of perpetual penitence. William Law had perplexed him with his doctrine of Christian perfection. And now there was this "sin of fear." In the very next paragraph in his *Journal* to that recording the triumph over depression—and Wesley in all his life never struck a higher note—there is a

sensible change of tone. "Who shall convert *me*?" he exclaims.

The answer is that Peter Böhler was to accomplish this feat. He was to convert not only John Wesley, but Charles Wesley, and, in addition, John Gambold. Gambold, resigning his Anglican cure, was elected a Moravian bishop. This was a mark of high confidence, but, on the whole,—especially as he had no quarrel with the Church and her formularies,—he would better have remained as he was. A man of talent, he wrote a drama entitled *The Martyrdom of St. Ignatius*, and he wrote fugitive pieces. These fugitive pieces render it evident that he was not happy. Goethe observes that English literature, at any rate in its later periods, is steeped in melancholy, and a glance at contemporary anthologies fully bears out this observation. Perhaps, therefore, it would be wrong to charge the whole of this convert's dejection on his Moravian episcopacy and the consequent severance from old ties and familiar associations. It is, however, open to surmise whether Gambold ever recovered from the shock of his conversion.

Though Böhler speaks of "our German mode" as simple, it is plain that many of his disciples—Charles Wesley, for one—found conversion so hard as to be almost impracticable. Now what was conversion as understood by Moravian and Methodist? In the first place, it had to do with fear. When Boswell asked Johnson the reason of those dreadful paroxysms at the thought of death, the doctor explained that he was tormented with apprehensions of hell, of eternal damnation. In the case of so great and good a man as the lexicographer, such apprehen-

sions must be pronounced, to a large extent, morbid, but, of whatever description the fear might be, it was in that painfully tender, that eagerly responsive state of mind that conversion was most easy.

John Wesley was troubled more by the sin of fear than by the fear of hell, but, of course, the admission that he was no Christian let in the hem of that terrible vision. To Wesley, as to Dante, hell was no dim speculation, no incredible myth, no superstitious fancy, no relic of obsolete devil-worship, but a central and cardinal fact. Böhler said to him, *Mi frater, mi frater, excoquenda est ista tua philosophia,* and on this point Wesley did not philosophise too subtly. He resigned himself to the authority of the Bible, and the Bible said, and said repeatedly, "There is a hell."

To the mere philosopher the subject is not free from difficulty. It is hard to reconcile the doctrine of perpetual retribution with the doctrine of divine compassion. Doubtless, a mystic may say that hell is a mental and moral necessity, entailed by the measureless ingratitude, the inexpiable crime of rejecting the love of God. This plea, however, is more ingenuous than convincing. Few persons are conscious of such rejection. It will be urged that practical rejection takes place in every act of sin. That may be, but the insertion of the adjective enormously diminishes the offence. The paramount question is the motive, and, even in the worst of crimes, it is seldom that there is any blasphemous intention.

However, let us do as Böhler suggests. Let us boil away our philosophy, and cleave to Revelation. Writing in the *North American Review* for April 1886, the late Mr. Gladstone remarked: "Menace, as well as promise,

menace for those whom promise could not melt or move, formed an essential part of the provision for working out the redemption of the world. So far as my knowledge and experience go, we are in danger of losing this subject out of sight and out of mind. I am not now speaking of everlasting punishments in particular, but of all and any punishment; and can it be right, can it be warrantable that the pulpit and the press should advisedly fall short of the standard established by the Holy Scriptures, and not less uniformly by the earliest and most artless period of hortatory Christian teaching?"

Wesley, at least, was secure from this reproach. He required that his disciples, if they would ascend into heaven, should first descend into hell. They were to descend into hell symbolically, in the miracle of Conversion, or the New Birth. Conversion did not mean simply amendment. Amendment there must be, but it was not the thing, the substance. It was an effect, a symptom, an outward and visible sign of a metaphysical, a psychological change. In the language of St. Paul, conversion was putting on the new man.

The orthodox mode of achieving this result was to induce a general crisis signalised by emotional tumult and intellectual chaos. By austere denunciation of sin, by holding before his terrified fancy lurid visions of the Last Things, by insisting on his personal interest in the approach of the Day of Judgment, the sinner was plunged into a spiritual furnace, now aglow with white agony, now dull with black despair.

This phase of the transforming process was described as "conviction of sin." No term was assigned for the duration of the phase. It might be a few hours, it

might even be a few minutes, or it might be weeks. Relief came in a vivid perception of Christ, not only as the Saviour of the world, but as forgiving and loving the penitent himself. This blissful experience has been the object of his quest from the beginning, but the retrospect of the past, an appalling sense of his own demerits, has rendered him incredulous. It has seemed to him impossible that the record of daily, of hourly transgressions can be erased, that his league with Satan, his long rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven can be condoned. But at length he does believe this. He has saving faith. He has been soundly converted. The seeker is now held to have found the Saviour, to have found peace. Yes, truly! After so many conflicts, so many doubts, he may well exclaim with Dante's imparadised progenitor,

"Dal gran martirio venni a questa pace."[1]

Probably it will be objected that this mode of regeneration translates into prose, and sometimes into not very elegant prose, the loftiest and most ethereal aspirations of the human soul, that it renders banal the spiritual processes of heroic and finely tempered natures endued with exquisite sensibility, with rare subtlety, with all that is comprehended in that incomprehensible word "genius." The faculty of imagination, always inseparable from genius and often confounded with it, has led seers to clothe their thoughts, their feelings, their incessant broodings over the mysteries of being in the "simple and sensuous" language of poetry.

Take, for instance, Newman's affecting lyric, "Lead,

[1] "Out of great martyrdom came I to this peace."

kindly Light." The little poem, more prayer than homily, more reverie than reasoning, tells of a silent conflict arising out of the intrusion of intellectual doubt and the as yet ineffectual resistance of the moral axioms. It has been made a hymn, and is sung with unmistakable gusto by thousands of persons, who never have doubted and never will doubt. There is, however, a broad resemblance between the sentiments it defines and those of a person "under conviction of sin."

The Methodist type of conversion may be criticised as too mechanical, too much a matter of vogue and constraint, but it is a very silly and vulgar delusion that conversion of any and every sort is a proper subject for ridicule. People who affirm that, and tell you that it will do you no harm to be converted, stamp themselves as animals. Of course, conversion does not follow invariably the same lines, but, in the end, it always implies the same thing. The man or woman who has passed through this ordeal has begun his ascent towards the Eternal.

Dante's experience seems to have been, like Newman's, a long, and gradual, and difficult transition from the night of doubt to the dawn of real faith. In the case of his countryman Manzoni the *dénouement* was dramatic. It was a genuine example of instantaneous conversion. The Italian, already sickly, was wending his way through the streets of Paris when he was overtaken by sudden illness, and sought refuge in the Church of St. Roc. On recovering, he was awed by the mystery of the place, and received such an influx of spiritual consolation that he felt himself aflame with faith. According to Quintilian, penitence is

more meritorious than innocence, and it may have been on that principle that Manzoni attached what many have deemed an exaggerated importance to this conversion. Indeed, his latest biographer, Signor Luca Bettrami, remarks that "instead of being a conversion in the true sense of the word, it was a spontaneous affirmation of what had been long ripening in the depth of that elect soul."

What now is to be said of Wesley's conversion? There is a partial, though not perfect, analogy between the two cases, inasmuch as neither Wesley nor Manzoni brought to the supreme moment a sullied reputation.[1] So far as outward eyes could detect, they were both good men, but both looked back to their conversion as an epoch of infinite seriousness. Wesley's conversion, however, was in no sense spontaneous. He preached at St. Andrew's, Holborn, the strange doctrine of Justification by Faith before he had realised in himself what it meant; and for preaching it he was forbidden the use of the church. His mentor encouraged the practice. "Preach faith," said Peter Böhler, "*till* you have it; and then you will preach faith, *because* you have it."

This admonition, a delicate morsel of Christian casuistry, leads Coleridge to observe, "Is not this *too* like, tell a lie long enough, and often enough, and you will be sure to end in believing it?" However, the philosopher is not unjust. He adds, "And yet much may be said, where the moral interest of mankind demands it, and reason does not countermand, or where the Scripture seems expressly to assert it."

[1] Wesley's affair with Miss Hopkey was an instance rather of imbecility than of moral faultiness.

The truth is that Wesley became intellectually convinced of the need of a specific change before he was personally cognisant of it by way of his emotions. He was in the position of having pledged himself to submit to the process, and meanwhile, in the words of the Psalter, he "tarried the Lord's leisure." He frankly rejoiced when his seraphic brother found that peace to which he was still a stranger, and incidentally he furnished a problem for Coleridge by recording that Charles, who was suffering from a second attack of pleurisy, recovered his strength from that hour.

There is really nothing to condemn in this posture of anticipation, or, if there be anything, it is lack of reticence and reserve. But eccentric conduct may often be accounted for by eccentric company. Wesley freely consorted with the Moravians, and took the young bishop to Oxford, where their singular appearance provoked many a civil leer in the golden youth, and probably more boisterous demonstrations from men and women who were not golden.

Always a gentleman, Wesley felt more concern for his companion than for himself, but Böhler's equanimity remained unimpaired. Ridicule, he said, does not stick to the clothes. Now mud and rotten eggs do, but they attest a degree of exasperation that is, or ought to be, most consoling. Men like Pitt, and Fox, and the Duke of Wellington have to fly before a fusilade of filth. Verbal sarcasms, on the other hand, convey pure contempt, and therefore make a considerable draught on one's philosophy. Anyhow, Wesley was a seasoned veteran. Against these devices of the enemy the ex-curator of the Holy Club needed not to be animated by Peter Böhler.

At length the Pentecostal grace was vouchsafed. Wesley, in his methodical or Methodistical way, had drawn up good resolutions, and assisted in forming a little society for the purpose of mutual edification. It was in connection with this little society that his conversion ultimately took place. "In the evening," he says, "I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."

The precise date of this event, so fruitful in consequences for Wesley and the world, was the 24th May 1738. About three weeks before, Böhler had departed for Carolina, but Wesley's first steps—and for a day or two they were feeble and full of hesitation, with no sense of joy—were guided by another Moravian called Telchig. However, amidst tremors and tribulation, the prime object had been gained. Wesley, as he avers, had found peace.[1] It is scarcely necessary to point out the vast historical interest attaching to the circumstance that the Apostle of Germany had so large and direct a share in the conversion of the Apostle of England.

This episode suggests several interesting questions. How did Wesley's state *after* his conversion differ from his state *before* his conversion? He has himself en-

[1] Wesley may have been "justified" on this occasion, but he had not, in any intelligible sense, found peace. See below.

lightened us. "I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered. Now I am always conqueror." His conflicts did not cease—he had manifold temptations—but through them all he was transfused with a consciousness of victory. Elsewhere he has defined the difference as that between slave and son. He had been a slave; now he was a son.

Is justification in this sense necessary to salvation? That is a momentous problem, and Wesley evidently felt it to be momentous. Probably at the time he deemed instantaneous conversion, for him at least, indispensable. But, if the Moravians were in the right, what of his venerable father, who had so lately departed this life in the faith and fear of God? What of his brother Samuel, his second father, who was so soon to reach the bourn? The old Westminster boy and Tiverton schoolmaster was strongly opposed to the doctrine of assurance. As his epistles testify, he did not at all believe in it. Neither did William Law. Ten days before his conversion, Wesley, in one of those fits of *gaucherie* which so disfigure his career, addressed to his former guide a highly improper letter. He told him that Böhler, of whose authority in these matters Law was profoundly unaware, thought his (Law's) condition most perilous, and concluded with the incredibly rude and dictatorial request, "Once more, sir, let me beg you to consider whether your extreme roughness, and morose and sour behaviour, at least on many occasions, can possibly be the fruit of a living faith in Christ?"

Wesley's *Journals* prove that his views as to the position of William Law, and as to justification in

general, became greatly modified. In the mellow light of "old experience" he saw that the rash judgment of a young enthusiast like Böhler must not be implicitly received as divine inspiration. On Tuesday, December 1, 1769, he wrote: "Being alone in the coach, I was considering several points of importance. And thus much appeared as clear as the day:—

"That a man may be saved who cannot express himself properly concerning imputed righteousness. Therefore to do this is not necessary to salvation:

"That a man may be saved who has not clear conceptions of it—yea, that never heard the phrase. Therefore clear conceptions of it are not necessary to salvation. Yea, it is not necessary to salvation to use the phrase at all:

"That a pious churchman who has not clear conceptions even of justification by faith may be saved. Therefore clear conceptions even of this are not necessary to salvation:

"That a mystic who denies justification by faith (Mr. Law, for instance) may be saved. But, if so, what becomes of the *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*? Is it not high time for us

'Projicere ampullas et sesquipedalia verba,'

and to return to the plain word, 'He that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted'?"

Montaigne divided mankind into three classes—the simple, the sceptical, and the supremely wise and good. His words deserve to be quoted. He observes that "men of simple minds, devoid of curiosity and learning, are Christians through reverence and obedience, that minds of middle growth and moderate

capacities are most prone to doubt and error, but that higher intellects, more clear-sighted and better grounded in knowledge, form a superior class of believers, who, through long and religious investigations, arrive at the fountain of light in the Holy Scriptures, and feel the mysterious and divine meaning of our ecclesiastical doctrines. And we see some who reach this last stage through the second, with marvellous fruit and confirmation, and who, having attained the extreme limit of Christian intelligence, enjoy their success with modesty and thanksgiving; unlike those men of another stamp, who, in order to clear themselves of the suspicions arising from past errors, become violent, indiscreet, unjust, and throw discredit on the cause they pretend to serve."

Wesley's adversaries would not have scrupled to apply these epithets—"violent," "indiscreet," "unjust," and "throwing discredit on the cause he pretended to serve"—to the great evangelist himself, and after that letter to William Law, who shall say that they would have been wholly inapposite? In the meanwhile, what about Wesley's adversaries? It is hardly too much to assert that they were comprised in two enormous categories—the Church and the World. In England those compartments were not water-tight. The partition between them had largely broken down, or was in constant danger of breaking down, not because the world was too good, but because the Church was not good enough. Wesley's *Appeals* are documents of singular value, as showing what the Church of England had become. It had become a "wheel of State." It had become Cæsar's. That the Church should be at least conterminous with the

nation is a high and noble ideal to which men should be ready to sacrifice the strongest personal likings. That the most sacred offices, and especially Holy Communion, should be prostituted to political ends, was an ignoble ideal, and no wonder Wesley kicked at it. He had acted foolishly towards Mrs. Williamson, but, unless you insist on purely conjectural motives, he had, in a moral sense, been guilty only of *trop de zèle.* With most ministers of the Anglican Church the opposite was the case. If all clergymen had been as punctual and conscientious as Wesley, Mrs. Williamson would have had immeasurably less reason to complain. It is probable that not a few—for they were not all ungodly and unholy men—would have preferred a higher standard of duty. But they dared not embrace, still less enforce, such a standard, for to attempt this spelt martyrdom.

If ever there was a man of whom it might be said that he adorned his profession, it was the late Mr. Matthew Arnold's favourite, Bishop Wilson. He took immense pains in educating his clergy, and, if the general condition of the Church was as Swift has described, may well be regarded as a redeeming feature. Now it so happened that the identical problem, to find which Wesley went deliberately out of his way, presented itself to Wilson in the ordinary course of duty.

It is a miserable story. Madam Horne, the wife of the Governor of the Isle of Man, confided to Archdeacon Horrobin that she had witnessed impropriety between Sir James Poole and a gentlewoman named Puller. On the faith of this statement, the archdeacon repelled the lady from the Lord's Table. Not to be outdone, the accused parties addressed themselves

to Bishop Wilson. On investigation the charge could not be proved, and had all the look of a malicious invention. Sir James Poole and Mistress Puller both denied it on oath, and, by way of reparation, Madam Horne was called on to acknowledge her fault "privately, before the vicar of the parish," at the same time "asking forgiveness for the great injury done." Madam Horne, on her husband's advice, declined to do anything of the sort, and sentence was pronounced excluding her from Holy Communion until such time as her offence should have been purged. The archdeacon, who was also chaplain to the governor, disregarded this decree of his bishop. Thereupon the bishop suspended the archdeacon.

The archdeacon's course was now clear. If he deemed himself oppressed, the obvious authority to invoke was the Archbishop of York. Horrobin could have had none of the instincts of a churchman, or he would not have hesitated what to do. Probably, he never did. At any rate, he appealed to his friend Captain Horne, and Captain Horne obliged his friend the archdeacon by finding that the bishop had exceeded his powers and by fining Wilson £50 and his vicars-general £20 each. As all three refused to pay, the man of war sent a party of soldiers to arrest them, and Bishop Wilson, Dr. Walker, and Mr. Curghay were kept closely confined in the prison of Castle Rushin for nine weeks.

The moral of this story is evident. The internal discipline of the Church was too lax, and the connection between Church and State too close. This admission does not imply that there should be no connection between Church and State. Scotland, too, had its religious establishment, but in Scotland they

managed otherwise. It is interesting to compare Convocation, as it existed before its "perpetual" suspension in the eighteenth century, with the General Assembly. "Take from us," said Knox, "the liberty of Assemblies, and take from us the Evangel, for without Assemblies, how shall good order and unity of doctrine be kept?" Convocation had nothing to do with doctrine or order, but, whilst it lasted, it gave opportunities for informal consultation, and that was something. But it was not liberty, or anything like liberty.

Wilson's career suggests another consideration. Both before and after his appointment as bishop, he repeatedly refused valuable livings on the ground that the acceptance of them would have conflicted with "the resolves of his conscience against non-residence." Few of his contemporaries shared these resolves, and, as the necessary consequence, churches were served by starving deputies, or served irregularly.

> "For a few weeks the pluralist may sport,
> But spends his happier hours at cards and court;
> Leaving his curate to the rustic taunt
> Against church livings he must ever want.
> Fanatics, infidels, and tythemen's jars
> The parish fill with hatred, vice, and wars."

No doubt there were exceptions. The Vicar of Wakefield was not, could not have been, unique. Not to wander afield—Epworth, in the time of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, offered a shining example of a parish priest doing his duty not only as a parish priest, but like a soldier. However, the system was against him. He was unpopular. If he reformed Epworth, we know what Epworth was long after his first arrival.

Dissent was played out. John Furz, an early

disciple and "half-itinerant" of Wesley, gives an amusing—or perhaps one should say, saddening—account of the way its priests—after the order of St. Paul—comported themselves in the rural parishes. Furz and his first convert had heard that a company of Dissenters met at a private house on Sunday evenings. Accordingly, the ardent Methodists repaired thither in the hope and expectation of a spiritual feast. What did they find? They found ten persons sitting round a table, and on the table were a Bible, a newspaper, a decanter, and glasses. And what were the religious exercises? "First they ridiculed the vicar, etc.; next they drank one to another, and offered the glass to us, but we did not drink. Then they related the faults of the churchwardens and the overseers of the poor, till one read part of the newspaper, which gave occasion to discourse on the state of the nation. At last one of them read a chapter in the Bible; another, looking at his watch, said, 'Bless me, it is time to go home; it is past ten o'clock!' 'But,' said one, 'we ought to go to prayer first.' But they were not agreed which of them should pray.[1] At last

[1] This reminds us of Charles Lamb's observations in the *Essays of Elia*. "In houses where the grace is as indispensable as the napkin, who has not seen that never settled question arise, as to *who shall say it*; while the good man of the house and the visitor clergyman, or some other guest belike of next authority from years or gravity, shall bandy about the office between them as a matter of compliment, each of them not unwilling to shift the awkward burden of an equivocal duty from his own shoulders?

"I once drank tea in company with two Methodist divines of different persuasions, whom it was my fortune to introduce to each other for the first time that evening. Before the first cup was handed round, one of these reverend gentlemen put it to the other with all due solemnity, whether he chose to *say anything*. It seems it is the custom

one of them stood up against a back of a chair, spoke a few words and concluded. My friend and I were kneeling together. I was weary with forbearing, and began earnestly to pray that God would awaken them, and by His goodness lead them to repentance, that they might know the things that belonged to their everlasting peace. They turned about and stared at me, as if I had been speaking Greek. However, they told us that we should be welcome to come again the next Sunday evening."

To return to the Church of England. No respect for this ancient Church could possibly survive that *reductio ad absurdum*—the Test and Corporation Acts. These Acts may have been, in a temporary sense, politic, but archbishops and bishops ought to have been good enough, and brave enough, to have scorned advantages. They should have shown themselves jealous for the honour of the sacred rite. That they failed to do so is eloquent of the depth to which religion in England had fallen.

Who was to blame? Most candid and unbiassed judges would answer—the clergy; but the Rev. Henry Thomson, M.A., author of a *Life of Hannah More*, whilst admitting the disagreeable nature of the facts, has come to another conclusion. The true criminals were, he thinks, *the people*! For a choice instance of special pleading commend us to the following:—

'The abolition of the 'daily sacrifice' of prayer and

with some sectaries to put up a short prayer before this meal also. His reverend brother did not at first apprehend him, but upon an explanation, with little less importance he made answer, that it was not a custom known in his church; in which courteous evasion the other acquiescing for good manners' sake, or in compliance with a weak brother, the supplementary or tea grace was waived altogether."

thanksgiving in every church but the cathedral; the non-observance by public worship of those public days of joy and humiliation which the Church had consecrated in her purest times; the contraction of the Sabbath services into one only in some churches, and their alternate total suspension in some others; the distant intervals at which the life-giving grace of the Eucharist is, in most churches, afforded—all those things are much less referable to the inattention of the clergyman than to the non-attendance of the people. When the daily sacrifice was wholly deserted; when the Sabbath morning service in the country, and the evening in towns, was abandoned also; when he bade the congregation to the Lord's Table, and 'they all with one consent began to make excuse'; it is at least nothing wonderful that he should have gradually foregone the unmeaning ceremony of presenting himself in the temple, where not even 'two or three' could be gathered to meet him in the name of the Saviour."

This is, to be sure, a very comfortable and charitable view of what was in fact gross dereliction of duty. One law for the army, another for the Church—that is the essence of it. Had Zephaniah or some equally stern, old-fashioned moralist been ordered to report on the Church of England in those days of decadence, he might have thundered, "Her prophets are light and treacherous persons—her priests have polluted the sanctuary—they have done violence to the law."

Let us, however, be fair, and remember that religion has at all times a more or less precarious hold on the fashionable class. To people of that sort, society, the world, is a profession, a career. They know no other. It is the be-all and end-all of their existence—that is,

if they are *very* fashionable. Religion, however, has usually secured, even from worldlings, an outward, a nominal homage. This homage, in the eighteenth century, it had either lost or was fast losing. The *abbé*, or his English equivalent, was abroad, and though not perhaps irredeemably bad, was no particular succour to the Church. When he did not jest on religion—and in his merry moods such jesting came not amiss—he would reprove the jester in a tone of politest raillery. The classical authority on the subject is, of course, Montesquieu. The author of the *Lettres Persanes* and friend of Chesterfield, who visited the country in 1732, was shocked at the lengths to which matters had gone. "There is no such thing as religion in England," wrote he; "if one speaks of religion, everybody begins to laugh."

If regard was shown for religion anywhere, by anybody, it was shown by the vestal virgin, when she could no more dissemble her antiquity, and in the country. Cowper, who exclaimed, "Hark, my soul, it is the Lord!" declaimed a satire entitled "Truth." These are some of the lines:

"Yon ancient prude, whose wither'd features show
She might be young some forty years ago,
Her elbows pinion'd close upon her hips,
Her head erect, her fan upon her lips,
Her eyebrows arch'd, her eyes both gone astray
To watch yon amorous couple in their play,
With bony and unkerchief'd neck defies
The rude inclemency of wintry skies,
And sails with lappet head and mincing airs,
Duly, at clink of bell, to morning pray'rs.
. . . . . .
She half an angel in her own account,
Doubts not hereafter with the saints to mount,

Though not a grace appears, on strictest search,
But that she fasts, and *item* goes to church.
Conscious of age, she recollects her youth,
And tells, not always with an eye to truth,
Who spann'd her waist, and who, where'er he came,
Scrawl'd upon glass Miss Bridget's lovely name;
Who stole her slipper, fill'd it with tokay,
And drank the little bumper ev'ry day.
Of temper as envenom'd as an asp;
Censorious, and her ev'ry word a wasp;
In faithful memory she records the crimes
Or real or fictitious, of the times;
Laughs at the reputations she has torn,
And holds them dangling, at arm's length, in scorn."

This Gorgon is eternal,—since the world began there have always been Miss Bridgets,—but she is typical of the eighteenth century as a residuum, as a last refuge of religion in a land whence, according to Montesquieu, white-winged Faith had altogether flown. Hannah More, whose ingenious biographer has been already cited, intimates that religion, even the most superficial, was subject to geographical limitations. Burke had said that "the humanity of Britain is a humanity of points and parallels." "Cœlebs" discovered that the Christianity of Britain was a Christianity of longitudes and latitudes.

"I was concerned to remark that two or three gentlemen whom I had observed to be very regular in their attendance on public worship in the country, seldom went to church in London; in the afternoon never. 'Religion,' they said, by way of apology, 'was entirely a thing of example. It was of great political importance. Society was held together by the restraints it imposed on the lower orders. When they were in the country, it was highly proper that their

tenants and workmen should have the benefit of their example, but in London the case was different. Where there were so many churches, no one knew whether you went or not, and where no scandal was given, no harm was done.'"

Wesley was so constituted that he could not away with merely conventional religion. He called persons who professed Christianity, whilst ignoring its precepts, "devil-Christians." He was indebted for this description to the American Indians, whose morals were of a superior order. The woods, it seems, of the New World echoed with such cries as—"Christian much drunk!" "Christian beat men!" "Christian tell lies!" "Devil Christian!" "Me no Christian!" Wesley's critics returned the compliment. "Look at their countenances, as they go to the House of Prayer. They appear to be going to serve, not God, but the devil. No joy, no pleasing hopes, painted there; but dejected, clouded, dark, and melancholy, they are unlike the worshippers of the Father of Mankind, a God of infinite Goodness, the God of all Comfort and Consolation."

There was probably much truth in this accusation of seriousness. Persons labouring under conviction of sin could not be expected to look gay, and frequent attendance at evangelistic services was bound to produce a grave, a thoughtful, and even a rigid mien. Only reflect, however, what it must have been to be responsible as citizens, as members of the great human brotherhood, as *Christians* for the eighteenth century. It was a brutal age. Hogarth, in his Rake's Progress, his Harlot's Progress, and his Gin Lane has preserved for us some of its more hateful features, and the very

success of the caricaturist is full of meaning. The conditions of the time lent him every assistance.[1] Then the cheapness of human life, the bloody penal code, the infernal prison system, with its gaol fevers sapping the health, not only of the inmates, but of the whole community—how is it possible to apologise for such horrors? Or take the army. To order a wretch a thousand lashes was deemed in no way inconsistent with either religion or humanity. Of course, the discipline was inflicted in instalments, thus adding to the agonies of the hour the terrors of instructed anticipation.

It would not be difficult to supplement this account, already too long, by many more pages, but there is no need. Whatever may be thought of Wesley's tactics, and making every allowance for satire and caricature, it is clear that a reformation was demanded, and could

[1] It is a curious and interesting point how far Hogarth's delineations aided the reformers of the time. The natural tendency of his labours as an artist was to make men reflect, and thus they must have helped, it is impossible to say in what degree, Wesley's missionary labours. The following extract, however, from Smith's *Life of Nollekens* seems to show that the contribution was undesigned. "Great as Hogarth was in his display of every variety of character, I should never think of exhibiting a portfolio of his prints to the youthful inquirer; nor can I agree that the man who was so accustomed to visit, so fond of delineating, and who gave up so much of his time to the vices of the most abandoned classes, was in truth a 'moral teacher of mankind.' My father knew Hogarth well, and I have often heard him declare that he revelled in the company of the drunken and profligate: Churchill, Wilkes, Hayman, etc., were among his constant companions. Dr. John Hoadly, though in my opinion it reflected no credit on him, delighted in his company; but he did not approve of all the prints produced by him, particularly that of the First State of Enthusiasm Displayed, which, had Mr. Garrick or Dr. Johnson seen, they could never for a moment have entertained their high esteem of so irreligious a character."

be achieved only by extraordinary methods. To apply such methods there must be an extraordinary man, and certainly Wesley was that. Southey had studied that marvellous character, had marked its virtues, had noted its defects, and what was his conclusion? He wrote to Wilberforce, "I consider him as the most influential mind of the last century; the man who will have produced the greatest effects centuries or, perhaps, millenniums hence, if the present race of men should continue so long." If there is any truth in those words, it is no pointless compliment to have styled Wesley, as was done earlier, the Apostle of England.

It has been said that Wesley, like all great men, possessed moral fibre. Just as he persisted in remaining at Oxford despite the wishes of his family, just as he sailed for Georgia despite the ridicule of the wise man, so now he became an apostle notwithstanding the jokes of his Uncle Matthew. This wonderful uncle—a wealthy and generous Dissenting physician practising in London—had a trick of turning up at critical junctures in the lives of his nephews and nieces, usually as a good genie and moderator of parental severity. In conversation he was inclined to be cynical. Once, when Charles Wesley was dining with him, he "bestowed abundance of wit" on John Wesley's "apostolical project." He observed that when the French found "any remarkably dull fellow among them, they sent him to convert the Indians." Charles disliked this vein, and replied,

> "To distant lands the apostles need not roam,
> Darkness, alas! and heathens are at home."

This answer silenced Mr. Matthew, who thereupon

refrained from vexing his nephew by further allusions to his "brother's apostleship."

When Meissonier was painting a snowy road in his picture of Napoleon in 1814 he used salt for model. The Russian artist Vassili Verestchagin wondered at this procedure, and, chatting on the subject, remarked, "If I had been you, I should have gone to Russia, and painted a study from nature." "Yes, but," Meissonier replied, "*nous autres Parisiens* do not move about so easily." Wesley was not like Meissonier. Although locomotion of every kind was infinitely harder than it became after the introduction of steam power, he did not object to a matter of a few hundred or a few thousand miles, provided that he had satisfied himself as to the necessity or propriety of the journey. He wished to matriculate for his apostleship, and he could matriculate nowhere but in Germany. Even before quitting Georgia, he had had thoughts of visiting the well of evangelical truth. Now, without more ado, he went.

Mention has been made of the emigration of the United Brethren from Moravia and Bohemia under stress of persecution. One party, led by Christian David, sought and obtained leave from Count Zinzendorf to settle in Saxony The young Pietist, who had been educated by Professor Franke at Halle, was busy wooing Countess Erdmuth Dorothea Reuss. However, his major-domo was a capable as well as pious functionary, and chose a site near Hutberg, on the high road to Zittau. Probably the name had something to do with the choice—there was not much to recommend it—for the major-domo, in his report, waxed thus witty: "May God bless the work according to His

loving-kindness, and grant that your Excellency may build a city on Watch Hill (*Hutberg*), which may not only stand under the Lord's watchfulness, but where all the inhabitants may stand on the watch of the Lord (*Herrn Hut*)." So they called the name of that town Herrnhut. The colony was the goal of Wesley's pilgrimage.

It was now 1738, and Count Zinzendorf, no longer impeded by love and courtship, was easily accessible. Zinzendorf was an eighteenth-century Tolstoi without, apparently, any of Tolstoi's genius. He had abdicated his rank, and was a great advocate of simplicity. He considered that Wesley — always a gentleman — had something to learn in this respect. So he set him to dig in his shirt-sleeves. When Wesley was in a high state of perspiration, Zinzendorf entered the garden, told him that the carriage was waiting, and, having announced that he was about to call on a certain noble of the neighbourhood, commanded his guest to accompany him. The neophyte was not unwilling, but wanted to wash his hands and put on his coat. The Count, however, forbade. He was to go just as he was. "You must be simple brother." Wesley was more than simple—he obeyed. Southey rejects this story on the ground that Zinzendorf had been in England, and knew better; but there is not much in that argument. The Count was evidently eccentric. As regards Wesley at least—the hero of the Hopkey adventure—the story has much probability.

In America Wesley, in accordance with Anglican use and the dictates of his unenlightened conscience, had refused a Moravian the privilege of Holy Com-

munion. The tables were now turned. The Moravians allowed his companion-in-travel, Mr. Ingham, to communicate, but not Wesley. The motive, however, was not revenge. "The congregation saw him to be a *homo perturbatus*, and that his head had gained an ascendency over his heart." Moreover, "they were desirous not to interfere with his plan of effecting good as a clergyman of the English Church."

These events occurred before Wesley's arrival at Herrnhut. He reached that primitive settlement on August 1, and spent a fortnight there. During most of the time he was occupied in listening to the expositions of Christian David and other eminent professors of evangelical doctrine. David was a remarkable man. Like the Founder of Christianity, he was a carpenter, and, in the intervals of his missionary labours, worked at his trade. The Jesuits of Moravia called him the "bush-preacher," which was better than if they had called him a "bush-ranger." However, he was something of a ranger. He had travelled in Holland, in England, in Denmark, and even in Greenland. Mechanic as he was, he was not ashamed to stand before princes and governors, and in Denmark he had preached before the court. This humble teacher became Wesley's new oracle. On the 3rd of August he writes: "This evening Christian David came hither. O may God make him a messenger of glad tidings!"

This, however, was not precisely the design of Providence. The Moravians had been right in describing their visitor as a *homo perturbatus*, and nothing that he heard from David, or Linner, or Nitschmann, or Döber, or Neusser, or Schneider tended to make him anything else. Wesley's chief desideratum was assurance of

pardon, and all these authorities agreed in stating that, according to their experience, years must elapse before the witness of the Spirit banished doubt and fear. This was bad news for Wesley, who had come to Germany in the hope of receiving "glad tidings" on this particular topic. Otherwise he seems to have enjoyed his travels. His spiritual perplexities had no effect on his general acumen and faculty of observation. Indeed, as we have seen, it was partly on this pretext that the Moravians excluded him from Communion. At Dresden he inspected, at somebody's desire, the great bridge, the large brass crucifix, and the equestrian statue of the late King Augustus; but he deems it necessary to apologise by ejaculating, "Alas! where will all these things appear when the earth and the works thereof shall be burned up?"

CHAPTER IV

LOVE AND DEATH

Glad Tidings—Love-Feasts—Suggestions of the Enemy—Real Methodist Love—George Whitefield—Girl's Clothes—Glamour of the Stage—Whitefield as Servitor—Conversion—Ordination—At Dummer—Popularity—Embarkation for America—Bishop Lavington—Cant—Methodist "Brides"—Elisabeth Wallbridge—Sydney Smith on Methodism—The Methodist "Confessional."

AT the outset of his manifesto—*An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*—Wesley lays down the cardinal principle of Christianity as a living and active force.

"We see (and who does not?) the numberless follies and miseries of our fellow-creatures. We see, on every side, either men of no religion at all, or men of a lifeless formal religion. We are grieved at the sight, and should greatly rejoice if by any means we might convince some that there is a better religion to be attained—a religion worthy of the God who gave it. And this we conceive to be no other than love; the love of God and all mankind; the loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved *us*, as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving every

soul which God hath made, every man on earth, as our own soul.

"This love we believe to be the medicine of life, the never-failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world, for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand. There is humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering, the whole image of God; and at the same time a peace that passeth all understanding, and joy unspeakable and full of glory.

> "Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind;
> Each prayer accepted, and each wish resign'd;
> Desires composed, affections ever even,
> Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heaven."

These eloquent words show enthusiasm at its best, and the beautiful grace of charity, "the very bond of peace and of all virtue," is worthy of such enthusiasm. Than this grace it would be hard to imagine a better corrective of the spirit of competition rampant in all the more vigorous races, and tending to crush out noble ideals in the blind struggle for wealth and luxury.

In Methodist polity love or charity had as its organ the love-feast based on the *agapé* of the primitive Church, and this, perhaps more than any other of Wesley's institutions, gave occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. A gentleman whose youth was spent on the uplands where Somerset merges into Devon, well remembers the suspicion with which love-feasts were regarded by the country-folk. The name was full of suggestion, and it seemed incredible that an assembly of both sexes, brought together on this pretext, should rest

content with quaffing a loving-cup, eating plain fare, and narrating the circumstances of their conversion.

That disinterested regard—and this was all that Wesley intended by love in relation to his fellow-creatures—sometimes rotted and decayed into sinister passion, was an article of faith with many opponents of Methodism. Whether they really believed that Methodists were specially prone to the indulgence of amorous inclinations or made a show of believing it as a weapon of controversy, it is a fact that this unpleasant accusation is constantly preferred, and that in a variety of grotesque forms.[1] Of all religious societies, it was said, the Methodists were exposed to the greatest temptations. The intercourse between the sexes was very frequent, very familiar, often very private. They were together at all hours of the day and night for the purpose of prayer and meditation. They travelled together to distant places under the shelter of religion. Their meetings were protracted to the latest hours of the night; and friendship would not suffer them to expose helpless females without some male escort. No reflection was meant on the delicacy of these proceedings, but the Methodists were more than human, if all of them could resist such opportunities.

Such criticisms cannot be admitted for an instant. Admit them, and you effectually destroy the pleasures of social intercourse. In the words of the genial Roman poet:

[1] The Rev. Dr. Free wrote: "In the remote countries of England, I have seen a whole troop of these divines on horseback, travelling with each a sister behind him." "O Sir, O Sir," replied Wesley,

"'What should be great you turn to farce.'"

"Hic nigræ succus loliginis; hæc est
Aerugo mera."[1]

And it is to be regretted that the anonymous critic, instead of ladling out abominable insinuations, did not seek to emulate the laudable resolution:

"Quod vitium procul afore chartis,
Atque animo prius, ut si quid promittere de me
Possum aliud vere, promitto."[2]

It is safe to allege that the average man of the world will require better "reasonings" than these before he will believe that young Methodists, indoctrinated with notions of hell and eternal retribution, were less fortified against sins of the flesh than the gay ladies and gentlemen who danced away the night in Grosvenor Square and in many a provincial assembly-room.

George Eliot could speak of Methodism at first hand. The time of her novel *Adam Bede* is not much later than that of *A Review of the Policy, Doctrines, and Morals of the Methodists*, and the noble description it contains for the love of the young carpenter for Dinah is the best reply to the malignant aspersions of anonymous assailants. "He was but three-and-twenty, and had only just learnt what it is to love—to love with that adoration which a young man gives to a woman whom he feels to be greater and better than himself. Love of this sort is hardly distinguishable from religious feeling. What deep and worthy love is so? whether of woman or child, or art or music.

[1] This is the juice of the black cuttle-fish; this is pure verdigris.

[2] Which vice I promise shall be far from my sheets, and from my mind before, if, that is, I can promise aught truly concerning myself.

Our caresses, our tender words, our still raptures under the influence of autumn sunsets, or pillared vistas, or calm majestic statues, or Beethoven Symphonies, all bring with them the consciousness that they are mere waves and ripples in an unfathomable ocean of love and beauty; our emotion in its keenest moment passes from expression into silence, our love at its highest flood rushes beyond its object, and loses itself in the sense of divine mystery.

"And this blessed gift of venerating love has been given to too many humble craftsmen since the world began, for us to feel any surprise that it should have existed in the soul of a Methodist carpenter half a century ago, while there was yet a lingering afterglow from the time when Wesley and his fellow-labourer fed on the hips and haws of Cornwall, after exhausting limbs and lungs in carrying a divine message to the poor."

Nature, it has been clearly demonstrated, never intended Wesley for a lover, but the opposite is true of his "fellow-labourer." George Whitefield, more passionate, less severe than Wesley, has been called the Luther of the movement of which Wesley was the Calvin. He was, in the truest sense, a *filius terræ*; there was no element of distinction in his early surroundings.[1] Indeed, he was born, in 1714, at the Bell Inn in the city of Gloucester; and at a time when the future lacked outline, perspective, and even direction, learnt to keep inn himself. In a very honest bit of autobiography he informs us that he "put on his blue apron and his snuffers"—what artistic habiliment is

[1] Whitefield, however, was of respectable descent. The family had gone down in the world.

intended by "snuffers," can only be conjectured; possibly, as Southey suggests, it is a misprint for another low-English term *scoggers*, signifying "sleeves" —"washed mops, cleaned rooms, and became a professed and common drawer."

Washing mops and cleaning rooms were not actions of which Whitefield felt that he had cause to be ashamed, and herein he is supported by the shadow of a great name.

> "Who sweeps a room as to the Lord,
> Makes that and the action fine."

There was, however, one boyish freak, the remembrance of which, he says, had often covered him with confusion of face, and, though there was not then, perhaps, much danger of a relapse, he hoped it would do so even to the end of his life. Finding his boys wild about acting, the master of the grammar-school had been gracious enough to write a play. This play was performed before the corporation, and Whitefield, dressed in girl's clothes, took the part of a woman. Hence the confusion of face. Betterton would have liked Whitefield for that. Until Davenant and he introduced the Continental fashion, the English practice had always been to assign the female parts to boys, who were, in this way, early dispossessed of their manhood. The case of their successors, however, left much to be desired. Their natural modesty was ignored, and they were thrust into parts to clasp and be clasped, to kiss and be kissed, sometimes by three or four different men.

A boy of ingenuous face and ingenuous modesty, Whitefield nevertheless felt, and felt strongly, the perennial attractions of the stage. For him, as for so

many, it was poetry in action. His digression into girl's clothes, and the penitential smart that followed, by no means cured him of the malady. Even the counter-attractions of religion were for a time ineffectual. When he was sixteen, he prayed many times a day, received the sacrament every Sunday, and during Lent almost destroyed himself with his rigorous fasting, but still he hankered. "I had a mind to be upon the stage, but then I had a qualm of conscience. I used to ask people, 'Pray, can I be a player, and yet go to the sacrament, and be a Christian?' 'Oh,' said they, 'such a one, who is a player, goes to the sacrament, though, according to the law of the land, no player should receive the sacrament, unless they repent. This was Archbishop Tillotson's doctrine.' 'Well then, if that be the case,' said I, 'I will be a player.' And I thought to act my part for the devil, as well as anybody; but, blessed be God, He stopped me in my journey."

Instead of going on the stage, Whitefield went back to school, and, at eighteen, obtained a servitorship at Oxford. It is a good thing that such institutions as servitorships have had their day, and ceased to be, but, whilst they existed, they seem to have suited some students, of whom Whitefield was one. As we have seen, he was used to washing mops and cleaning rooms, and his services were therefore preferred to those of awkward and shamefaced men, who thought themselves born for higher uses.

Whitefield had heard of the Methodists before he went to Oxford, but, though a despised set, they were Students and Fellows—men of birth and breeding. The humble servitor, therefore, was constrained to keep his

distance. But, all the while, he felt intense sympathy with them, and rejoiced when an opportunity occurred of making their acquaintance. A pauper had sought to flee this present evil world by suicide; and Whitefield despatched a messenger to Charles Wesley as a fit and proper person to administer reproof and consolation. The servitor strictly charged the woman not to reveal his name, but the woman did. It happened that the sender was known to Charles Wesley by repute, and, notwithstanding the awkward disparity of rank, the student of Christ Church thought he might safely ask him to breakfast. He went, and Wesley put into his hands a book called *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, the perusal of which convinced Whitefield that he must be born again or damned.

Naturally, the discovery of the choice threw the impressionable young man into a state of extreme terror and anguish. His sensations are hardly to be imagined. He suffered from a feeling of constriction, "like a man locked up in iron armour," or, perhaps one may suggest, in the folds of "that old serpent, the devil."[1] For whole days and weeks he lay prostrate on the ground in silent or audible prayer. That his outer man might exhibit some conformity to his inner, he left off powdering his hair, wore woollen gloves, and went about in a patched gown and dirty shoes. His patrons did not approve of these voluntary humiliations, and he lost their support.

Even this did not suffice. To the external defacement of the "ass," as St. Thomas Aquinas contemptuously designates the body, Whitefield must add ruinous tests

[1] Rev. xx. 2.

of constitutional strength. The pious Israelites—Christians before Christ—"wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins." "Destitute, afflicted, tormented," they sojourned "in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." But these evils they could not help, or, if they could, only by the sacrifice of their religion.

Whitefield was differently situated. He was under no clear necessity, whether moral or physical, to copy their self-denial, at any rate their special modes. There was properly no reason why he should kneel, shivering, under the trees in Christ Church meadow; why he should suffer his hands to blacken with the cold; why he should starve for forty days on coarse bread and sage tea without sugar. No Methodist in these times would affirm such things to be necessary or advantageous, and a review of the circumstances may well excuse the suspicion that Whitefield, like Simeon Stylites, was determined to shorten his life by disease. If that was his object, he was successful. Anyhow, he brought on a "fit of sickness," which lasted seven weeks, and for which he trusted he should be grateful through the endless ages of eternity.

When the seventh week was drawing to a close, Whitefield found peace. Supposing the fit of sickness to have been really a condition of redemption, the poor servitor was right in deeming the price of that peace and that redemption extremely cheap. He found, however, not only peace, but—what Wesley could not find, or could find only after a long time—joy and assurance. When Whitefield looked back to that day, the rapturous feelings returned and burst forth in a passion of eloquence. "But oh! with what joy, joy

unspeakable, even joy that was full of and big with glory, was my soul filled, when the weight of sin went off, and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith, broke in upon my disconsolate soul! Surely it was the day of my espousals —a day to be had in everlasting remembrance." At this period neither John nor Charles Wesley knew anything of conversion. The pupil had outstripped his masters.

When the "great twin brethren"—spiritually twin —quitted England for the wilds of Georgia, their offspring, the Holy Club—never a very healthy bantling—was in danger of collapse. It wanted a "curator," and though Whitefield was obviously qualified for the post, it is possible that his modesty and humility might have hindered his coming forward, if Sir James Philips, of London, had not taken the matter vigorously in hand. Whitefield was deserving, but he was poor. He was not likely to win a fellowship, and the problem was how to maintain him in his "curatorship." This problem was solved by the generosity of Sir John Philips, who gave him a pension of twenty pounds a year, to be increased to thirty, if he would stay at Oxford.

The next event of importance was his ordination. In order that his health might be more firmly established, Whitefield was recommended to seek his native air. At Gloucester he visited the poor, and prayed with the prisoners, and in these and other ways drew the regards of the bishop, Dr. Benson. Whitefield was still only twenty-one, but the bishop, in a chat after evening service, informed him that, though he made it a rule not to receive candidates under the age of

twenty-three, he should esteem it his duty to admit him to orders, whenever he thought fit to apply for them. Accordingly, Whitefield was ordained. With reference to the "laying on of hands," Whitefield uses some remarkable expressions. He says, "I can call heaven and earth to witness that, when the bishop laid his hand upon me, I gave myself up to be a martyr for Him who hung upon the cross for me." The martyrs of Methodism—some of them, at least—will receive attention in the following chapter. They were true martyrs, and died for the faith. The Wesleys and Whitefield—in a larger than the ecclesiastical sense—might also have claimed to be martyrs. They, it is true, were neither burnt nor beheaded, but they boldly proclaimed unpalatable doctrines, and challenged—not once nor twice, but all their lives long—the fury of the populace. On due consideration, it seems nothing short of a miracle that the three heroes died at last in their beds.

Whitefield's first essays presaged not persecution, but popularity. His maiden sermon was preached in the church of St. Mary de Crypt, where he had been baptized, and his histrionic training—not to mention his exhortations at Oxford—now stood him in good stead. There was a large congregation, naturally, and Whitefield spoke with unction. His audience was profoundly impressed. It was afterwards reported to the bishop, probably by some envious fellow-citizen, that the sermon had driven fifteen people mad. Dr. Benson, however, was quite unmoved by this statement, and expressed the hope that the "madness" might not be forgotten before the following Sunday.

Gloucester seemed a promising field, but the same

week Whitefield returned to Oxford, and entered on his "curatorship." This charge was not, as he had imagined, destined to be for long. Soon he was found at the Tower Chapel in London, where, as at Gloucester, he came, and saw, and conquered. His ministrations included daily prayer at Wapping Chapel, daily visits to the soldiers in the infirmary and barracks, and a weekly sermon at Ludgate Prison. Then we find him back at Oxford once more, with the old problem of temporal necessities revived. Whitefield, both from disposition and circumstances, was much more capable of being patronised than either of the Wesleys, who had all the pride and independence of gentlemen, and he accepted gratuities with alacrity. Moreover, Lady Betty Hastings provided exhibitions for his disciples. It would be neither kind nor reasonable to reverse the natural order of cause and effect, but the bounty of aristocratic ladies no doubt tended to strengthen the Holy Club, which had become, under Whitefield's management, a sound and flourishing institution.

Then followed an interregnum, a long vacation, in the Hampshire parish of Dummer—an insignificant place where Whitefield longed for Oxford, or at least his Oxford friends, much as Ovid at Tomi longed for Rome. In his loneliness he solaced himself with an imaginary character drawn by the unconverted William Law, and was as unwearied in discharging the daily round of parochial duty as ever Wesley was. Of course, he was only curate-in-charge, but even if he had been a fully-fledged *persona ecclesiæ*, his mental conformation was such that he could not be permanently fitted into an ordinary sphere. In this respect he was like Wesley, who said that the world was his parish.

When Mr. Kinchin, for whom he had been serving, became dean of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Whitefield's anxieties on account of the prisoners ceased. Mr. Kinchin was a good man, an exemplary pastor, and he would look after them. In the same way, Harvey, of sepulchral fame, was willing to fill his place at Dummer. The world was all before him where to choose, and Whitefield chose Georgia. The choosing was not entirely his own. John Wesley had written to him after this fashion: "This harvest is great, but the labourers are few. What if thou art the man, Mr. Whitefield?" Whitefield thought he was, and he decided to embark—but not yet. This was partly the fault of the vessel in which he was to sail, but Whitefield perhaps was not sorry. The interval was passed neither idly nor in obscurity. The irreverent would say that the nimble months were spent by him "starring" in the provinces, or "bringing down the house" in London. These somewhat vulgar phrases really describe, much better than more elegant terms, what happened. Through his zeal, and sympathy, and talent the novice won a succession of histrionic triumphs such as might have turned the head of one not wholly devoted to his sacred calling. It is truly astonishing to read of his successes, which induced his friends to lament the "pretty preferment" he might have gained by staying at home. But the expedition to America appealed to the romantic element in his constitution almost as much as the crowded churches and weeping audiences in Bristol and in London. His popularity was enormous. He had to leave Bristol at midnight, or he would have endured the terrible scandal of being escorted from

the city by a cavalcade. It was much the same in London, where Whitefield battled with the newspapers. A journalist of the time insisted on advertising him. He reported Whitefield's sermons, and informed the world where he was to preach next. The preacher protested against this enforced notoriety, but what was the use of that? It was not what the preacher wanted, but what the public wanted, that concerned the journalist.

Although no formal complaint had been lodged with the bishop, Whitefield's departure for America was unquestionably well-timed. He found the conversation of Dissenters "savoury," and that, though the hue and cry of enthusiasm had not yet been raised, was enough to disgust churchmen with him. But now a strange thing happened. Wesley's return almost coincided with Whitefield's going away, and the older Methodist landed just in time to communicate with his former disciple. The disillusioned missionary must have considered that the old relations still subsisted. At any rate he addressed Whitefield with that conscious superiority displayed towards everybody not his oracle for the time being. Wesley had beguiled the voyage by casting lots—that is to say, he would open the Bible at random expecting to ascertain the will of God from the text that first offered. Before, he had suggested that Whitefield might be the man; now, he withdrew the suggestion, and, in the light of fancied revelation, commanded him to return to London. Whitefield, however, took leave to consult his own judgment. He remembered the story of the old prophet, the lion, and the ass that survived his disobedient owner; and he resisted Wesley's attempt to

seduce him from the path on which he had entered after so much deliberation. Thus they twain parted.

What was the secret of Whitefield's success? The most potent element in his success, as in that of all real prophets, was a heavenly afflatus. He had a message for his age, and he delivered that message with incomparable force and incomparable tenderness. Garrick is said to have envied Whitefield's manner of pronouncing "oh!" The pathos and persuasion he could throw into that single vocable took audiences by storm. Southey speaks of Whitefield's squint, and avers that it did him no harm. Perhaps it would be truer to cite this personal defect as a crowning proof of the mastery of mind over matter. In some respects the eye is as eloquent, if not more eloquent, than the tongue. The Romans are said to have conquered the enemy with their eyes before they slew them with their swords; and every orator, in his crises of passion, spreads havoc with the concentrated power of his eyes. Whitefield had to forego this advantage; nevertheless, he is said to have preached like a lion. On the whole, however, he may be considered to represent, far more than Wesley, the erotic side of Methodism. Wesley no doubt was capable of a sentimental style. He prated about "lovely congregations" and "lovely families," but, born a patriarch, he could not break into a true rhapsody. He was too logical, too incisive; he liked fighting too much. Therefore sentiment did not sit well on him.

With Whitefield it was just the reverse. He was open, innocent, ingenuous. He did not care what he said, provided that it affected his listeners, and this, apparently, it always did. As the result, he exposed

himself to the rasping sarcasms of the cool-headed and cold-hearted Bishop Lavington, who had his own reasons for being annoyed with the Methodists, and whom the Methodists in their turn must have regarded as the impersonation of Satanic influence.[1] The episcopal strictures on Whitefield's erotics ran thus:

"What heart can hold out against your persuasive eloquence, your flights and your allusions, melting, tender, amorous, soft, and sweet? God gives you a text, and directs to a method on the pulpit stairs; the blessed Lamb reveals, and Sister Williams, who is near the Lord, opens her mouth to confirm it; Jesus rides triumphantly from congregation to congregation in the chariot of the gospel; the preacher sits in his dear Lord's arms, leaning on His bosom, and sucking the breasts of His consolation. . . . Infants, babes, and sucklings of grace are borne on the sides of Christ, dandled on His knees, and walk under the droppings of His blood, while from the lovely face and lily lips of the sweet Jesus distil precious promises and sweet-smelling myrrh.

"In the meantime, among our soul-seeking brothers, our sweet societies of women, our love-feasts, our precious, poor, sweet little lambs, a gracious melting is visible; to their absent friends on the top of Pisgah, to those sweetly sleeping on that bed perfumed by our Lord, a thousand kisses are sent.

"When brother Whitefield preached, the smiles of a cherubim (*sic*) were in his countenance; the hearts of the hearers were melted into tears; they had an over-weening fondness for him; they ran and stopped him in the alleys, they hugged him in their arms, and

[1] They styled him, however, a "theological buffoon."

said, 'Where thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge.'"

However foolish and extravagant some of Whitefield's sayings may have been, it is hard (and, of course, needless) to find any excuse for Lavington. His parody of Methodism reads much like a parody of Christianity. To speak of "the sweet Jesus" as of some moppet among Methodists is plain blasphemy. If Lavington did not find Jesus sweet, what right or business had the man to be bishop of a Christian community? He would have been more in place as a political hack, as a writer of lampoons. At the same time, it is impossible to deny that Methodism generated as by-products both cant and rant; and as it is the accident rather than the substance that wins the attention of the multitude, many of the "small," as well as of the "great vulgar"—John Wesley used, and perhaps coined, the latter most happy and convenient locution—regarded Methodism as compounded of these two elements. Rant is one of the effects springing from enthusiasm, and the consideration of it may be deferred to a later chapter. The other topic may be touched on here.

While rant is conceived of as turbid ebullition uncontrolled by the reasoning faculty, cant has been thought to symbolise calculating hypocrisy. In common parlance it denotes, no longer "slang," but the insincere and indiscriminate use of biblical phraseology. This practice, like any other affectation, may be condemned on the score of taste, but hypocrisy —that is another matter. The early Methodists followed Wesley's example, and were, for the most part, men of one book. They not only read the Bible,

they loved it, and what more natural, what more inevitable than that they should draw upon its stores of eloquence for terms and phrases idealising life? Wesley from the first was much addicted to the habit —perhaps it had come down as an heirloom from his Puritan ancestors—but he was sensible of its incongruity, and in theory disapproved of it. Writing to Mr. "John Smith,"[1] he recognises the following limitations:

"That we ought not to relate a purely natural case in the Scripture terms that express our Lord's miracles."

"That low and common things are generally improper to be told in Scripture phrase."

"That scriptural words that are obsolete, or which have changed their signification, are not to be used familiarly, as neither those technical terms which were peculiar to the controversies of those days."

The kind of cant most characteristic of the Methodists related to their grand doctrine of love, and the favourite comparison was that of a bridal. Mystics of every age, of every clime, have been fond of this figure, but it is open to question whether it ever was worked so persistently and so systematically as by the Methodists. Already we have seen how Whitefield, in the ardour of his remembrance, alludes to the day of his conversion as the day of his espousals. There is no harm in that. The marriage-morn is, or should be, a time of joy, though in many minds it is bound to give rise to solemn, and even sad, reflections.

[1] Mr. "John Smith" is believed to have been Dr. Thomas Lecker, Bishop of Oxford (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury). He used this style in corresponding with Wesley, and was a sort of Nicodemus.

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Still the phrase will serve. It is doubtful, however, whether we ought to hail with quite Wesley's satisfaction the discussion of what are, after all, occult mysteries by precocious children.

John B., he tells us, was a boy of ten. He was taken ill, and, being unable to sleep, conversed with his sister, whose age is not stated. "'We shall soon be with angels and archangels in heaven. What signifies this wicked world? Who would want to live here that might live with Christ?' The maid said, 'I wish I was married to Christ.' He said, 'Being married to Christ is coming to Christ and keeping with Him. All may come to Him. I am happy, I am happy.'"

Even more unsatisfactory than the bandying of such phrases between babes and sucklings, was the application of them to "lovely young women"—especially those cut down in their maiden prime. The number of Methodist "brides," in the ideal and spiritual sense, is quite alarming. Here again it is needful to distinguish between the lesson of watchfulness in our Lord's parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, and the iterated use of the simile in the case of particular persons. This is *crambe repetita*; this is cant. There was no lack of it.

"In the afternoon I buried the remains of Judith Perry, a lovely young woman snatched away at eighteen; but she was ripe for the Bridegroom, and went forth to meet Him in the full triumph of faith."

"This morning Abigail Pilsworth, aged fourteen, was born into the world of spirits. I talked with her the evening before, and found her ready for the Bridegroom. A few hours after, she quietly fell

asleep. When we went into the room where her remains lay, we were surprised. A more beautiful corpse I never saw; we all sung,

'Ah! lovely appearance of death,
What sight upon earth is so fair?
Not all the gay pageants that breathe
Can with a dead body compare.'

All the company were in tears. And in all, except her mother, who sorrowed (but not as one without hope), they were tears of joy. O death! where is thy sting?"

The original source of the comparison is without doubt the parable of our Lord, but the expression "ripe for the Bridegroom," which is, properly speaking, applicable only to the bride, seems to point to an unusual interpretation of the parable. Was not Wesley's mind more or less influenced by a tale of Ephraim Syrus, of which he says, "I wonder it was never translated into English." It had been translated, and well translated, into Italian, far back in the fourteenth century, by Domenico Cavalea, and it was in his version that the present writer first made its acquaintance. It may be, as Wesley says, that the tale had never been Englished, but as much cannot be stated now, since he himself at once proceeded to English it. This story, undoubtedly good of its kind, is a picturesque embodiment of all that is dear and significant to the mystic soul, but is not particularly adapted for transference to those pages. The heroine is the foster-child of a hermit, tender, yet strict. She is, however, led astray, and turns out a female counterpart of the Prodigal Son. Like the Prodigal Son she repents, and her repentance is accepted.

Amidst transports of grief and shame, the erring orphan exclaims, "Where shall I go? Into what pit shall I cast myself? Where is the exhortation of that blessed man, 'keep thy soul spotless for thy immortal Bridegroom'?"

The Methodist "brides" were not usually Magdalens. Most, if not all, were young ladies of irreproachable morals, and none more than the "Dairyman's Daughter." This saintly maiden, a native of the Isle of Wight and a contemporary of Wesley's old age, has been in a sense immortalised by the Rev. Legh Richmond, a clerical acquaintance and admirer, whose tract, bearing the above inscription, has been scattered broadcast over the globe, and after a hundred years is still selling. The writer, however, intimates that Elisabeth Wallbridge owed her conversion to a minister of the Church of England, whereas the real instrument was the Rev. J. Crabb, an officer of Wesley. Still more remarkable, he nowhere gives the slightest hint that "precious Betsy" was a Methodist. A lenient critic, Mr. Carvosso, remarks, "This might have been very proper, circumstanced as he was." Nothing of the sort. The first error may have been involuntary, but Legh Richmond must have known perfectly well to what persuasion the "Dairyman's Daughter" belonged, and he should have had the honesty and candour to state the truth. One result of this neglect was an edifying exhibition of the national failing.

"A clergyman from a distance, while visiting the grave of the Dairyman's Daughter, was very lavish in his eulogies of the piety of her whose 'sacred dust was sleeping in that humble grave.' He was observed to gather some flowers which grew on the turf

that covered the grave, and carefully deposit them in his pocket. A gentleman who was present fell into conversation with him, and in the course of which (*sic*) asked him if he knew that Elisabeth Wallbridge was converted amongst the Methodists, and that she lived and died a member of that Christian communion? The clergyman listened with blank astonishment, and as he turned away he was observed to drop the flowers on the ground, while the narrow-minded gent (*sic*) walked off in evident disgust. The charm was dissipated. 'Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us' (Luke ix. 49, 50)."[1]

Elisabeth Wallbridge was a domestic in a farm-house. She picked up scraps of knowledge at a dame's school, but never learnt to spell properly, and, as regards the learning of this world, must be written down as illiterate. She was, however, rich in faith, and, had she been born in an age when faith was respected, would perhaps have been canonised. It might be foolish to liken her to the great woman-saint of Siena, but the truth remains that Elisabeth wrote in a way that would not have shamed Catherine. She is, for this reason, well fitted to stand forth as a representative Methodist "bride." Six months before her death, at the age of thirty, she began, but never finished, a personal narrative introduced by a prologue of true mystic warmth. "May the Lord pardon His unfaithful, unprofitable servant, and sanctify me throughout soul, spirit, and body, and plunge me in the Godhead's

[1] *Methodism in the Isle of Wight*, p. 226.

deepest sea, that I may be lost in His immensity! O glorious hope of perfect love! May it ever fill and lift my ravished spirit up to things above! There I shall for ever love. I thought I would just set down, as the Lord is pleased to give me time and strength, a few of His particular mercies and favours, as I can recollect. He has abounded in love and mercy to me. O that I had made Him all the returns that love could make by giving myself a sacrifice daily unto Him!"

It would be monstrous to describe such language, when it records genuine and generous feeling, as cant. There are thoughts that lie too deep for tears, but man, and especially woman, has an almost insatiable craving for expression. It is, in a great measure, by virtue of his superior faculty of expression, itself part of a larger faculty of invention, that man takes precedence of the brutes. Anyone at all versed in mystic literature finds himself quite at home in these ejaculations of Elisabeth Wallbridge, and he is ready to believe, from internal evidence, that they are spontaneous and sincere. Such language, however, easily degenerates into cant. It becomes cant the moment it ceases to define the actual emotions of the speaker, and the Methodists were not without grave temptations to overstate their experiences.

To ordinary minds it seems impossible that human beings could long maintain themselves at so high a pitch of religious enthusiasm as that indicated in the above passage, or that they could soar to such a pitch at will. The Methodists, however, were suspected of attempting this feat. In his bitter criticism of Methodism in the *Edinburgh Review*, Sydney Smith observes: "The Methodists are always desirous of making men

more religious than it is possible, from the constitution of human nature, to make them. If they could succeed as much as they wish to succeed, there would be at once an end to delving and spinning, and of every exertion of human industry. Men must eat, and drink, and work; and if you wish to fix upon them high and elevated notions, as the *ordinary* furniture of their minds, you do these two things: you drive men of warm temperaments mad, and you introduce, in the rest of the world, a low and shocking familiarity with words and phrases which every real friend of religion would wish to keep sacred. *The friends of the dear Redeemer who are in the habit of visiting the Isle of Thanet* (as in the extract we have quoted)—is it possible that this mixture of the most awful with the most familiar images, so common among Methodists now and with the enthusiasts in the time of Cromwell, must not in the end divest religion of all the deep and solemn impressions it is calculated to produce?"

This consideration—that familiarity breeds contempt—appears the most formidable objection to the class-meeting, one of the earliest and most characteristic products of Methodism. The class-meeting was the smallest unit of the Methodist Society. John Wesley's conversion occurred in a meeting of that sort, and it is therefore not to be wondered at that he laid stress on the institution. The object, however, was not so much to make as to retain converts, to assist them from justification to sanctification, to help them in their march from the wicket-gate on to the bound of the waste, on to the City of God.

Wesley did not understand what was meant by being "righteous overmuch." He had endeavoured, but with

obvious difficulty, to render this point clear to himself in his Oxford days. In his later career he exalted and strove after the ideal of Christian perfection, and Christian perfection, he thought, would be best attained through the class-meeting, the members of which were to "provoke each other to love and good works." Sydney Smith's caution against wishing to make men more religious than their nature permits would have had no effect on Wesley. He would have scouted the limitation as an insult to both God and man.

The other objection most commonly urged against the class-meeting—that it is virtually another name for the confessional—applies, if it can be said to apply at all, much more forcibly to the band-meeting, a smaller and purely voluntary function, which was very private, and in which the hardy associates were supposed to tell, not only their own, but each other's shortcomings. The likening of the Methodist class-meeting to the confessional is, however, absurd. The Methodists did not hide crimes or even tendencies to crimes, as Wesley shows in what he calls a "tale of real woe." Wesley never accepted any responsibility for the aberrations of his followers, and thus he did not hesitate to narrate, with something of grim enjoyment, the indiscretion of a certain dame, who mentioned in band that she had "found a temptation towards Dr. F." This interesting discovery was speedily communicated to her husband, who vented his indignation in a cudgelling. "He is now thoroughly convinced of her innocence, but the water cannot be gathered up again! He sticks there, 'I do thoroughly forgive you, but I can never love you again.'"

CHAPTER V

SCANDAL OF THE CROSS

Difficulties and Dangers—Harmless Bishops—Field-Preaching—At Kingswood—"Extraordinary Circumstances"—Causes—Posture of the Clergy—A Sermon and its Effects—Wesley's "Journalese"—Fury of Dissent—Brutal Conduct to Methodist Women—Methodist Valour—"No Popery!"—Methodism and the Fashionable World—*Humphry Clinker*—The King of Bath.

SOON after Wesley's return from Germany, he was joined by Whitefield, whose first term in the plantations was even shorter than his own. Before his departure for America, many of Whitefield's friends had said to him, "What need of going abroad for this? Have we not Indians enough at home? If you have a mind to convert Indians, there are colliers enough at Kingswood."

This counsel was of a piece with Charles Wesley's poetical rejoinder to his uncle Matthew, and considering the spiritual destitution of many parts of England and the prevailing apathy manifested towards religion, the advice was not inopportune. Those who urged this course had probably little or no idea of the difficulties and dangers it involved, but whatever the difficulties and dangers may have been, the Wesleys and Whitefield, with truly apostolic courage, were ready to face them.

Speaking of the difficulties, an acute writer has observed: "To spread o'er American wilds order and civilisation; to pour on the astonished mind of the savage cannibal gospel truths; to bend untutored ignorance to faith or acquiescence, have signalised the martyr and canonised the saint. Yet I am of opinion that greater difficulties present themselves to the reclaimer of a European wallowing in filthy iniquity, and obstinately persisting in surly ignorance. The man who attempts to coerce and restrain habits so inveterate and passions so furious, and to teach animals scarcely susceptible of any pleasure but the most gross sensual gratification, has obstacles to surmount unknown to an instructor of the simple but unpolluted sons of nature." And the dangers were as great as the difficulties.

Southey does himself less than justice by undervaluing these obstacles. "I pray God," Whitefield had said, "that the same spirit may be found in all that profess the Lord Jesus as was in the primitive saints, confessors, and martyrs. . . . This is my comfort, the doctrines I have taught are the doctrines of Scripture, the doctrines of our own and of other reformed Churches. If I suffer for preaching them, so be it! Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord, my God!" Upon these and similar utterances Southey passes the inept criticism: "Such fears, or rather such hopes, were suited to the days of Queen Mary, Bishop Gardiner, and Bishop Bonner; they are ridiculous or disgusting in the time of George the Second, Archbishop Potter, and Bishop Gibson."

It will be shown in the present chapter that Whitefield's apprehensions were by no means ill-grounded. Persecution is not a royal or episcopal monopoly, nor are beheadal and burning the sole forms that persecu-

tion can assume. Such brutal and inhuman methods were no doubt, as regards the clergy, out of date—more perhaps from indifference than from charity—and the worst that Whitefield anticipated from official displeasure was imprisonment. No Government, however, can protect its subjects from the penalties—at any-rate, *all* the penalties—of unwelcome innovation. No Government, for instance, can hinder a sudden onset of the populace. The barbarous scenes witnessed even now, when education has become general, in connection with games of football, prove to demonstration that, until passions are eliminated from human breasts, there is always danger of eruption. The seeming inertia is the inertia of a volcano whose fires are latent, not extinct. The mobbing of the Salvation Army at Eastbourne, not many years ago, has been succeeded by free fights in churches between rival religious factions. These things are always possible. Attack prejudice, and a horde of devils will rise up to answer you. Whitefield knew, what Southey appears to have forgotten, that King George and the bishops could not suppress the hostility which he and his colleagues, by their procedings, were bound to evoke.[1]

It is noticeable that Samuel Wesley, writing to his mother about a fortnight before his death, expressed himself as quite satisfied that no harm would befall his brother from the bishops. "As I told Jack, I am not afraid the Church should excommunicate him (dis-

[1] "We congratulate ourselves that the days of persecution are gone by; but persecution is that which affixes penalties upon *views held*, instead of upon *life led*. Is persecution *only* fire and sword? But suppose a man of sensitive feeling says, The sword is less sharp to me than the slander: fire is less intolerable than the refusal of sympathy" (F. W. Robertson on *The Tongue*).

cipline is at too low an ebb), but that he should excommunicate the Church. He is pretty near it. . . . . Ecclesiastical censures have lost their terrors; thank fanaticism on the one hand, and atheism on the other. To talk of persecution from thence is mere insult. It is—

> 'To call the bishop Grey-beard Goff,
> And make his power as mere a scoff
> As Dagon, when his hands were off.'"

It is clear that neither John nor Charles Wesley had the least desire to fly in the face of authority, and it is equally clear that Dr. Edmund Gibson, the Bishop of London, had no intention of quarrelling with the Wesleys about singularity of doctrine. When the brothers waited on him to receive his admonitions, he framed a definition of "assurance" which was not their definition, but which he does not appear to have urged on them as a condition of orthodoxy. Other subjects discussed were the distinction between Antinomianism and Justification by Faith, which many held to be a distinction without a difference, and the question of baptizing Dissenters who had already submitted to the rite at the hands of lay persons. These matters were amicably disposed of. The bishop advised his visitors to read up ecclesiastical law; and in return the Wesleys asked the bishop not to be easy in receiving accusations against them, and, in any case, to bring them acquainted with such accusations, which Dr. Gibson civilly agreed to do.

Those were the days of Whig supremacy, and it is therefore not wholly surprising that, on one point, Dr. Gibson was more liberal than the Methodists, who were still High Churchmen enough to look with dis-

dain on the ordinances of Dissenters. By a singular fatality it has happened several times that the Bishop of London and the Archbishop of Canterbury have resembled in comparative importance the Father Ambrose and Abbot Boniface of Scott's misnomered novel. Gibson was vastly more respectable than Potter. He was a great ecclesiastic. Sir Robert Walpole was reproached for his confidence in Gibson. "You suffer him to be a pope." "And," said the statesman, unperturbed, "a very good pope he is."

The bishop made a vigorous effort to contend with Charles Wesley, especially on the question of lay baptism, and, having alluded to his power of inhibition, cautioned him not to push things to extremes. The archbishop, on the other hand, seems not to have known his own mind. He hated innovation, and declared he would have none of it in his time, but he said of the Methodists, "These gentlemen are irregular, but they have done good, and I pray God to bless them." He counselled the Wesleys, if they would be extensively useful, to assail immorality and vice, leaving doubtful matters alone. John Wesley in his old age, recollecting this advice, called Potter a "great and good man"; and, indeed, he seems to have had a share of that wise moderation which is understood to be a primary qualification for the chair of St. Augustine, but is none the less ruinous to personal greatness. If Wesley had been a Potter, he might have enjoyed honours and emoluments, but his name would never have been inscribed in the bead-roll of illustrious churchmen.

Nothing is more remarkable than the prominence of Charles Wesley at this period. The fame of the younger brother, except as a hymn-writer, has been

overshadowed by that of the elder, but, in a literal and chronological sense, it is Charles, rather than John, Wesley, who is entitled to be called the Founder of Methodism. He, it will be recollected, not John, originated the Holy Club, the germ of the whole movement; and now that Methodism was about to make a stronger and wider appeal, it was Charles Wesley that dared the first step—the step that costs—so far as London was concerned.[1] What makes this circumstance more extraordinary is the fact that, whenever disputes arose—and the history of Methodism, as of Christianity generally, is full of them—Charles Wesley went invariably Tory. He hated innovation as much as Archbishop Potter, but, in spite of himself, he was compelled to innovate.

During John Wesley's absence controversy had arisen in the society at Fetter Lane about lay-preaching, and Charles had raised his voice against it. But field-preaching was almost as great a novelty, and the younger brother, in the teeth of his own prejudices and those of the archbishop (who seems to have muttered something about excommunication), began to preach in the fields. This, if he was to preach at all, was a practical necessity. The effect of their espousing and enforcing the doctrine of Justification by Faith had been to close the churches of London against the brothers. They were now the grand heresiarchs

[1] As will be seen, Whitefield anticipated both the brothers, to whom he was now oracle. This conduct, however, did not appear so strange in him. "The Wesleys," remarks the *Scots Magazine* for 1739, "are more guilty than Whitefield, because they are men of more learning, better judgment, and cooler heads." The *Scots Magazine* is right. The responsibility for Methodism *as a system* unquestionably rests on the Wesleys.

of the age. Samuel Wesley expressed the general sentiment when he wrote, "They design separation. They are already forbidden all the pulpits in London; and to preach in that diocese is actual schism. In all likelihood it will come to the same all over England, if the bishops have courage enough."

Discipline and enthusiasm, philanthropy, and conservatism waged an even battle in Charles Wesley's mind until Whitefield, who had more of decision in him, told him what to do. This was to preach in the fields the next Sunday. By that means "he would break down the bridge, render his retreat difficult or impossible, and be forced to fight his way forward." Charles Wesley broke down the bridge. "June 24th," he says, "I prayed and went forth in the name of Jesus Christ. I found near a thousand helpless sinners waiting for the word in Moorfields. I invited them in my Master's words, as well as name: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' The Lord was with me, even me, the meanest of His messengers, according to His promise. At St. Paul's, the psalms, the lessons, etc., for the day put new life into me; and so did the sacrament. My load was gone, and all my doubts and scruples."

Regarding this irregularity, Samuel Wesley, the genius of order and of orthodoxy, announced himself as follows:—"For my own part, I had much rather have them picking straws within the walls, than preaching in the area of Moorfields." The gifted schoolmaster, perhaps, did not mean all that he said, but the exaggeration was not playful. Samuel would have stopped the field-preaching if he could.

An innovation in London possesses at least an external significance impossible in the provinces, and, from a national standpoint, Charles Wesley may be said to have borne the brunt of unpopularity. The original theatre of Methodist missionary operations was, however, Bristol and the neighbourhood. When Whitefield recommended Charles Wesley to preach in the fields, he spoke with the authority of one who had tried and had succeeded.

A journal called the *Weekly Advertiser* supplies particulars of two episodes relating to the period of the clerical boycott. If this journal may be believed, Charles Wesley managed to occupy a pulpit, the use of which had been refused him by the incumbent. The trick was simple. Before the outraged parson had any conception of his purpose, he had audaciously mounted the stairs. It is hardly likely that a man of the stamp of Charles Wesley would condescend to such demagogic arts. Supposing the story to be true, he was probably the victim of a practical joke. There is, at all events, good reason to believe that a practical joke, or practical mistake, was perpetrated at St. Margaret's, Westminster, what time Whitefield was pushed by the crowd, and in particular by one Mr. Bennett, into the pulpit from which the rector and his henchmen vainly endeavoured to banish him. Although the blame for this conduct rested with his unwise admirers, odium would inevitably fall on Whitefield as having forced himself into another man's pulpit. Accordingly, he departed for Bristol.

The precaution was useless. The fame of his exploit —thanks to the *Weekly Advertiser*—had preceded him, and he found, on arriving, the churches closed to his

ministrations. When, after a few days, two clergymen relented, the chancellor of the diocese intervened, and Whitefield was admonished that he might not preach without a licence. If he did, the penalty would be suspension, followed, in case of obduracy, by expulsion. Then at last Whitefield remembered the old advice of his friends, and preached to the colliers at Kingswood. His congregations were not select. They were not refined. But they were large, very large. We read of two thousand, of four thousand, of ten thousand, even of twenty thousand persons assembling to hear him in various places near Bristol. At Moorfields, later in the year, an army of sixty thousand is computed to have been present. Loose estimates, no doubt, but conveying the notion of vast audiences.

Whitefield's mission at Bristol began early in February 1739, and lasted six weeks. He then experienced a return of that spiritual ambition which made Dummer so irksome. As the experiment of field-preaching had answered so well at Kingswood, he thought it might answer still better in London. If numbers are any criterion, his success at Moorfields and at Kennington Common was certainly more colossal. Everywhere, it seems, he made collections for religious and charitable objects in Georgia, for which, in the month of August, he sailed.

Although Whitefield in his letters addressed Wesley as "Honoured Sir," and was in age and station, as well as in the weightier matters of character and intellect, inferior alike to John and Charles, he appears for a time to have actually taken the lead. He was the first of Methodists to solve the ever-present and ever-difficult problem of reaching the masses, and as neither

of the brothers was afflicted with *false* pride, they were content to accept Whitefield's guidance and to learn, if possible, his secret. When Whitefield, flushed with victory, wished to exchange Bristol for London, he sent an urgent summons to John Wesley, whom he proposed to name his successor. There was some demur. Charles Wesley, as always, objected. Eventually, however, John Wesley went, and, having heard Whitefield preach at the Bowling Green, Rose Green, and Hannam Mount, took up his cross. His journal shows plainly what were his feelings at the time.

"*Saturday* (*March* 31).—In the evening I reached Bristol and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to the strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church.

"*April* 1.—In the evening (Mr. Whitefield being gone) I began expounding our Lord's Sermon on the Mount (one pretty remarkable precedent of field-preaching, though I suppose there were churches at that time also) to a little society which was accustomed to meet once or twice a week in Nicholas Street.

"*Monday*, 2.—At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining the city, to about three thousand people. The scripture on which I spoke was this (is it possible that anyone should be ignorant that it is fulfilled in every true minister of Christ?): 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath

anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind: to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.'"

With the exception of a few brief intervals, Wesley laboured at Bristol from April to December, and, on the whole, with remarkable success. The colliers of Kingswood were fair game for excommunicated zeal. They were in the parish of St. Philip's, but the church was three miles distant, and any desire the collier might have to attend divine service was at once checked by the cool indifference of his pastors and masters. The maxim that Mahomet must go to the mountain is now well understood and obeyed in responsible quarters, but in those days, owing to the more severely aristocratic ordering of English society, such condescension was hardly dreamed of. Dr. Johnson said that "those who lived to please, must please to live." The beneficed clergy, and especially the pluralists, were under no such disagreeable constraint.

The parochial system has its merits—it is regarded as the glory of the English Church—but neither the parochial nor any other system ought to win excessive reverence. Circumstances vary, and it is usually considered a mark of wisdom to adapt yourself to them. The ossified Church of England had lost this faculty. Both at Kingswood and elsewhere, the parochial system and the population no longer squared, no longer coincided. The times were distinctly out of joint. In order to remind the colliers of their fealty to St. Philip's, the incumbents of other churches

repelled colliers presenting themselves at Holy Communion, just as if colliers were children or dumb, driven beasts, capable of being coerced into observance of ecclesiastic rules. It is possible to treat a highly disciplined man, a man sensitive on the point of etiquette, as a puppet or a pawn, but the rough toiler sets a high value on his moments of liberty, and has a taste for *patronising* churches.

"Where are you going this evening, Thomas?"

"I am going to St. John's. You see I must divide my favours."

Thomas is not such a nonentity as you might have thought. When Whitefield and Wesley called on him and invited his good opinion, he was disposed to be very polite, and liberally responded to their friendly overtures.

John Wesley, as has been frequently pointed out, was of a different mental constitution from Whitefield, whose head had *not* gained an ascendency over his heart, and who was thus preserved from many embarrassments. The same might be said, in a more qualified sense, of Charles Wesley, though he had not inherited the warmly sympathetic nature of the son of the inn. John Wesley's *inhumanity*—to use a strong, but justifiable expression[1]—bore fruit of a painful and singular kind. When Whitefield preached, when Charles Wesley preached, nothing abnormal occurred. People may have wept—many did weep—but those were gracious drops. It has always been the privilege of orators, the function of actors, to stir the emotions; and to touch the heart with the feeling of mortal sorrow was recognised by Aristotle as a refining and

[1] His contemporaries criticised his "stoical insensibility." The moral surgeon, however, must not flinch.

elevating influence, as the moral justification of the stage. Physical contortions and convulsions, hysteria, *fits* are of another complexion, benefiting neither body nor soul. Yet these were the manifestations with which John Wesley was brought face to face, as the direct or indirect result of his own unselfish labours.

So many baseless slanders were circulated about the Methodists that Wesley's own statements regarding those strange, those melancholy, but yet not wholly unwelcome concomitants of his preaching possess a quite exceptional value. "*May* 1.—At Baldwin Street my voice could scarce be heard amidst the groanings of some, and the cries of others calling aloud to Him that is mighty to save; and ten persons then began to say in faith, 'My Lord and my God!' A Quaker, who stood by, was very angry, and was biting his lips, and knitting his brows, when he dropped down as thunderstruck. The agony he was in was even terrible to behold. We prayed for him, and he soon lifted up his head with joy, and joined us in thanksgiving. A bystander, John Haydon, a man of regular life and conversation, one that zealously attended the public prayers and sacrament, and was zealous for the Church and against Dissenters, laboured to convince the people that all this was a delusion of the devil; but next day, on reading a sermon on 'Salvation by Faith,' he suddenly changed colour, fell off his chair, and began screaming, and beating himself against the ground. The neighbours were alarmed, and flocked together. When I came in, I found him on the floor, the room being full, and two or three holding him as well. He immediately fixed his eyes on me, and said, 'Ay, this is he I said

deceived the people. But God has overtaken me. I said it was a delusion of the devil, but this is no delusion.' Then he roared aloud, 'O thou devil! thou cursed devil! yea, thou legion of devils! thou canst not stay in me. Christ will cast thee out. I know His work is begun. Tear me in pieces, if thou wilt; but thou canst not hurt me.' He then beat himself against the ground; his breast heaving, as if in the pangs of death, and great drops of sweat trickling down his face. We all betook ourselves to prayer. His pangs ceased, and both his body and soul were set at liberty. With a clear, strong voice he cried, 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from this time forth for evermore!' I called again an hour after. We found his body weak as an infant, and his voice lost; but his soul was in peace, full of love, and rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God."

"*May* 21.—In the evening, at Nicholas Street, I was interrupted, almost as soon as I had begun to speak, by the cries of one who strongly groaned for pardon and peace. Others dropped down as dead. Thomas Maxfield began to roar out and beat himself against the ground, so that six men could scarcely hold him. Except John Haydon, I never saw one so torn of the Evil One. Many others began to cry out to the Saviour of all, insomuch that all the house, and indeed all the street, for some space was in an uproar. But we continued in prayer, and the greater part found rest to their souls."

"*June* 15.—Whilst (at Wapping) I was earnestly inviting sinners to 'enter into the holiest' by this 'new and living way,' many of those that heard began to

call upon God with strong cries and tears. Some sunk down, and there remained no strength in them; others exceedingly trembled and quaked; some were torn with a kind of convulsive motion in every part of their bodies, and that so violently that often four or five persons could not hold one of them. I have seen many hysterical and many epileptic fits; but none of them were like these, in many respects. One woman was greatly offended, being sure that they might help it if they would; but she also dropped down in as violent an agony as the rest."

This is the evidence, then. It would be easy to multiply illustrations drawn from the same source, as has been done, with marvellous appetite for the abnormal, by Luke Tyerman. The present writer has found it sufficiently irksome to transcribe even the passages cited, without adding more. The question now is, What was the right attitude to assume towards these and kindred phenomena? Charles Wesley took up the position that, while there might have been genuine cases of hysteria, in other cases the hysteria was pure imposture. To a preacher these clamours were highly inconvenient. They drowned his voice. At Newcastle, therefore, Charles Wesley gave notice that anyone thus offending should be carried to the furthest corner of the room. He makes the significant remark, "My porters had no employment the whole night."

The "outward affections" thus promptly checked happened four years after the "first preaching," which, Charles Wesley thought, was the halcyon period of genuine hysteria. And, indeed, the reality of these early cases is beyond doubt. Hypocrisy, of course, is

never to be encouraged; was it proper to encourage the original sickness? At first Whitefield conceived that it was not; and, on June 25, 1739, he addressed a letter of remonstrance to Wesley.

"HONOURED SIR,—I cannot think it right in you to give so much encouragement to those convulsions which people have been thrown into, under your ministry. Was I to do so, how many would cry out every night? I think it is tempting God to require such signs. That there is something of God in it, I doubt not. But the devil, I believe, interposes. I think it will encourage the French prophets, take people from the written word, and make them depend on visions, convulsions, etc., more than on the promises and precepts of the gospel."

Twelve days later, Whitefield arrived on the scene of action, when Wesley appears to have "talked him over." Moreover, the identical effects attended his own application of Scripture—an argument which necessarily silenced any remaining objections. That Whitefield's opposition had collapsed is very evident from the satisfied and triumphant tone of Wesley's conclusion: "From this time, I trust, we shall all suffer God to carry on His own work in the way that pleaseth Him."

The truth is that the Methodist lawgiver regarded the convulsions as "signs and wonders" sent or permitted on account of the hardness of men's hearts; but he is forced to confess that many, although they saw, would not believe. As to the immediate causes, Wesley, never at a loss for "principles," offers a choice of alternatives. The incidents may be explained as resulting from a "strong, lively, and sudden apprehen-

sion of the heinousness of sin, the wrath of God, and the bitter pains of eternal death." Or they may be explained by "the agency of those spirits who still excel in strength, and, as far as they have power from God, will not fail to torment whom they cannot destroy; to *tear* those that *are coming* to Christ. It is also remarkable that there is plain Scripture precedent of every symptom that has lately appeared" —particularly, it may be supposed, that of the boy who had a dumb spirit. Hence the italics.

These theories, though advanced separately and independently, are not intended to be mutually exclusive. The theory of demoniacal possession, which Wesley would have abandoned with extreme reluctance, is superadded to the natural causes, though, for others, faith in it is optional. The natural causes alone sufficed. Why then did Wesley entertain so strongly the notion of Satanic torture? The reason is obvious. Assuming that the unhappy persons were torn by devils, Wesley was able to accomplish what the disciples of Christ at first could not. By the power of God he cast out devils. The bestowal of supernatural grace stamped with divine approval the opening of his larger ministry.

Since even Wesley did not regard natural causes as opposed to spiritual agencies, it will be expedient perhaps to confine matters within the limits of human reason and experience. Amongst the natural causes Wesley's personality stands out prominent and distinct. No doubt the "extraordinary circumstances" were as much a subject of surprise to him as they were to most people. He did not foresee what was to occur, but the seeds, many of them, were in himself.

His intense conviction, his absolute devotion, his quiet but authoritative manner, his learning and ability compelled attention in a way that Whitefield's addresses hardly ever did. It could not be said of Wesley, as might perhaps have been said, in a comparative sense, of Whitefield: "And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument, for they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when this cometh to pass (lo, it will come) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them." Wesley's audiences needed not to wait for an era of general desolation, though national calamity was on the wing. They recognised him as a prophet, and behaved accordingly. The man and the message were suited to each other. They exercised a terrible fascination.

Thirty years later, writing to Mr. Joseph Benson, Wesley remarks on the inadequacy of pure reason as an engine or implement in human affairs. "'Child,' said my father to me, when I was young, 'you think to carry everything by dint of argument. But you will find by and by how very little is ever done in the world by clear reason.' Very little indeed! It is true of almost all men, except so far as we are taught of God—

> 'Against experience we believe,
> We argue against demonstration;
> Pleased while our reason we deceive,
> And set our judgment by our passion.'

Passion and prejudice govern the world; only under the name of reason. It is our part, by religion and reason conjoined, to counteract them all we can."

By distinguishing reason from religion, Wesley shows that he does not consider them identical—it is difficult to see how he could—or, at any rate, coextensive. Religion includes elements—*e.g.* feeling and imagination—which may become, in a high degree, irrational. To these elements, though not to these alone, Wesley, in common with most popular preachers, appealed. But he did not, like many popular preachers, appeal to them separately. He did not, that is to say, make people fear, and fancy, and weep, and wonder, and *laugh* by turns. Less perhaps from choice than from innate necessity, he appealed to a conglomerate, an amalgam of reason, imagination, and feeling, to the capacity for what is called "sensation." Now "sensation," while it admits of preparation, is, like the Methodist type of conversion, instantaneous, the work of a moment. It was this strain on the faculties, operating through the nervous system, that disturbed the equilibrium of people, that produced those painful scenes and exhibitions of frenzy.

But the explanation is not yet complete. Where the subjects are, not merely individuals, but crowds, the effects are proportionately severe. Emotion is contagious; precedent—especially when visible—constraining. An inscrutable and sometimes very terrible force, fashion does not argue and will not be argued with. A crowd is never absolutely sane. It sounds a strange paradox, but on reflection it will be seen that Methodism, arch-enemy of balls and masques, of foppery and finery, was yet aided by fashion. Fashion deals not in externals only. The essence of fashion is the doing something that you might not otherwise do, because others do it. The Quaker, in Wesley's *Journal*,

succumbed to intensified fashion, to the swift, overmastering access of transfused religious emotion.

It was among the simple and poor that Wesley won his Oudenardes and Ramillies. He attacked no particular vocations, no particular localities. The miners of Kingswood, the farm-hands and shepherds of remote villages, the shopkeepers of petty country towns, the weavers of congested manufacturing districts, the Duke of Cumberland's foot and horse—each of these classes was attacked, and each of these classes, in the persons of its representatives, yielded to the Captain of souls, and followed His banner, a truly great army. The task was no pastime, but it was achieved. How? Commonly, by preaching Hell. The object was to make men *feel*, and this object was gained by calling down fire from heaven, by the introduction into a discourse of something electric. Wesley knew the value of a shock, and he shocked his audiences rudely, deliberately, and incessantly. It was his chosen and not ineffectual method for the awakening of pagan England. If fits were in some cases the result, that was not his concern. He noted the fact as a fact of natural history. It did not affect his purpose in the least. He had moral courage. He suffered God to carry on His work in His own way.

But if Wesley had moral courage, he had also brilliant physical courage. The incidents of his early ministry were not calculated to smooth his future path, nor can the doctrines of sin and eternal punishment be described as popular. They might, and did, exert an antipathetic attraction, but attraction of this kind is full of peril. That way lies martyrdom. When Wesley appeared in a town, his endeavours were

resented in advance. It was much the same as in apostolic times. Those who had turned the world upside down had come thither. The Methodist leaders had forfeited whatever protection they might have enjoyed from their priesthood in the Church. She disowned them.

"It pleased God," says Wesley, "by two or three ministers of the Church of England to call many sinners to repentance, who, in several parts, were undeniably turned from a course of sin to a course of holiness.

"The ministers of the places where this was done ought to have received those ministers with open arms; and to have taken those persons who had just begun to serve God into their particular care; watching over them in tender love lest they should fall back into the snare of the devil.

"Instead of this, the greater part spoke of those ministers, as if the devil, not God, had sent them. Some repelled them from the Lord's Table; others stirred up the people against them, representing them, even in their public discourses, as fellows not fit to live; papists, heretics, traitors; conspirators against their king and country.

"And how did they watch over the sinners lately reformed? Even as a leopard watcheth over his prey. They drove some of them from the Lord's Table, to which till now they had no desire to approach. They preached all manner of evil concerning them, openly cursing them in the name of the Lord. They turned many out of their work, persuaded others to do so too, and harassed them in all manner of ways.

"The event was that some were wearied out, and so turned back to the vomit again: and then these good pastors gloried over them, and endeavoured to shake others by their example."

These are strong words, but Wesley, looking at the matter from the standpoint of "the cause," and speaking from personal knowledge, did not exaggerate. Even if harsher language had been used, it might have been pardoned. At Wednesbury the incumbent pronounced a discourse of which Wesley says, that he never "heard so wicked a sermon, and delivered with such bitterness of voice and manner." The results of this address, spoken in 1743, were deplorable. Men, and women, and children were stoned, and beaten, and pelted with mud. Homes were entered, and licensed burglars, achieving the ends of injustice, carried away the furniture. Wesley was at Bristol when the news of this outbreak arrived, and he at once hastened to comfort and encourage his distressed flock. It soon appeared that the shepherd was to be smitten, as well as the sheep.

"I was writing at Francis Ward's in the afternoon, when the cry arose that the mob had beset the house. We prayed that God would disperse them; and so it was. One went this way and another that, so that in half an hour not a man was left. I told our brethren 'Now is the time to go'; but they pressed me exceedingly to stay. So, that I might not offend them, I sat down, though I foresaw what would follow. Before five, the mob surrounded the house again, and in greater numbers than ever. The cry of one and all was, 'Bring out the minister! We will have the minister!' I desired one to take the captain by the

hand and bring him into the house. After a few sentences interchanged between us, the lion was become a lamb.

"I desired him to go and bring one or two of the most angry of his companions. He brought in two, who were ready to swallow the ground with rage; but in two minutes they were as calm as he. I then bade them make way, that I might go out among the people. As soon as I was in the midst of them, I called for a chair, and asked, 'What do any of you want with me?' Some said, 'We want you to go with us to the justice.' I replied, 'That I will, with all my heart.' I then spoke a few words, which God applied, so that they cried out with might and main, 'The gentleman is an honest gentleman, and we will spill our blood in his defence.' I asked, 'Shall we go to the justice to-night or in the morning?' Most of them cried, 'To-night, to-night!' on which I went before, and two or three hundred followed, the rest returning whence they came.

"The night came on before we had walked a mile, together with heavy rain. However, on we went to Bentley Hall, two miles from Wednesbury. One or two ran before to tell Mr. Lane that they had brought Mr. Wesley before his worship. Mr. Lane replied, 'What have I to do with Mr. Wesley? Go and carry him back again.' By this time the main body came up, and began knocking at the door. A servant told them Mr. Lane was in bed. His son followed, and asked what was the matter. One replied, 'Why, an't please you, they sing psalms all day; nay, and make folks rise at five in the morning; and what would your worship have us to do?' 'To go home,' said Mr. Lane, 'and be quiet.'

"Here they were at a full stop, till one advised to go to Justice Persehouse, at Walsall. All agreed to this, so we hastened on, and about seven came to his house. But Mr. Persehouse also sent word that he was in bed. Now they were at a stand again, but at last they all thought it the wisest course to make the best of their way home. About fifty of them undertook to convoy me; but we had not gone a hundred yards, when the mob of Walsall came pouring in like a flood, and bore down all before them. The Darlaston mob made what defence they could; but they were weary, as well as outnumbered, so that in a short time, many being knocked down, the rest went away and left me in their hands.

"To attempt speaking was vain, for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea. So they dragged me along till we came to the town, where seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go in, but a man, catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the mob. They made no more stop till they had carried me through the main street, from one end of the town to the other. I continued speaking all the time to those within hearing, feeling no pain or weariness. At the west end of the town, seeing a door half-open, I made towards it, and would have gone in, but a gentleman in the shop would not suffer me, saying they would pull the house down to the ground. However, I stood at the door, and asked, 'Are you willing to hear me speak?' Many cried out, 'No, no! Knock his brains out! Down with him! Kill him at once!' Others said, 'Nay, but we will hear him first.' I began asking, 'What evil have I done? Which of all have I wronged in word or deed?'

and continued speaking for above a quarter of an hour, till my voice suddenly failed. Then the floods began to lift up their voice again; many crying out, 'Bring him away! bring him away!'

"In the meantime my strength and my voice returned, and I broke out aloud into prayer. And now the man who just before headed the mob turned and said, 'Sir, I will spend my life for you; follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head.' Two or three of his fellows confirmed his words, and got close to me immediately. At the same time the gentleman in the shop cried out, 'For shame, for shame! Let him go!' An honest butcher, who was a little further off, said it was a shame they should do thus; and pulled back four or five, one after another, who were running on the most fiercely. The people then, as if it had been by common consent, fell back to the right and left, while those three or four men took me between them, and carried me through them all. But on the bridge the mob rallied again. We therefore went on one side over the mill-dam, and thence through the meadows till, a little before ten, God brought me safe to Wednesbury, having lost only one flap of my waistcoat, and a little skin from one of my hands.

"From the beginning to the end, I found the same presence of mind as if I had been sitting in my own study. But I took no thought for one moment before another. Only once it came into my mind that if they should throw me into the river, it would spoil the papers that were in my pocket. For myself, I did not doubt but I should swim across, having but a thin coat and a light pair of boots."

It may be well to observe that this long passage has not been cited for the sake of the style. Wesley, though he knew what pertained to elegance and propriety, did not aim at literary distinction, and would probably have been the first to disclaim the post-prandial compliment bestowed on his *Journal* by an eminent statesman, who described it as an unstudied masterpiece of English literature. This is the language of eulogy, not of criticism. The *Journal* is a wonderful monument of a wonderful man, but "literature" it is not. It is a very plain, honest, unpretending record. More than that, there are in the above narrative several expressions that offend against taste. Wesley could not plead ignorance of the requirements of taste. We have had his admission that "low and common things are generally improper to be told in Scripture phrase," yet we find him saying, with reference to the noisy mob, "the floods lift up their voice." This may be a venial offence in a zealous clergyman, but it is not very venial in a mere writer, to whom some effort at style is an obligation. Wesley, however, would as lief have worn a fine coat—he spoke words to this effect—as cultivate a fine style. The phrase "What evil have I done?" is even more exceptionable as suggesting a parallel between himself and his Divine Master. All these lapses arose out of Wesley's position as a "*homo unius libri.*" He was an omnivorous reader, and solaced his often long and lonely journeys with almost any work that came to hand, but the study of the Bible—and study is not precisely the same as reading—infected his writings with a sort of patavinity, a cast of dialect. Thus, one of the greatest of literary charms—freshness, individual expression—

is absent from his writings; and the accusation of cant helped forward the scandal of the Cross.

If the passage was not cited as a specimen of style, neither was it cited by reason of the rare interest of the matter. No important consequences ensued. Wesley was not the worse for his adventure, and this circumstance lends a touch of melodrama to the whole relation. As the incident occurred long ago, and we were not there, cynical unreason recks of mock heroics. After all, the mob was not unamiable. Nobody was killed. No, but Wesley was in evident peril, and this was one of a series of adventures studding the crusade of Methodism, from which Wesley escaped, humanly speaking, through his own coolness, and courage, and natural command over his fellows. By his cheerfulness and serenity, and by his resolute bearing, he won the respect of a class not by any means too gentle.

Although he allows that he was not unduly perturbed, Wesley regarded his escape as miraculous. This was eminently characteristic of the man. Nothing happened to Wesley in an ordinary or commonplace way. He had an absolute craze for the strange, the uncanny, the unaccountable. Thus he gives in a parenthesis several particulars designed to correct suggestions of mock heroics, and to invest an obscure affair with the halo of invisible ministries. Many attempted to throw him down on a slippery path, but he never stumbled. Many sought to lay hold of his collar and clothes, but failed, Wesley, however, losing the flap of his waistcoat. A "lusty man" aimed repeated blows with a large oaken stick at the back of Wesley's head, but each blow, it was impossible to say why, missed its mark. Another ruffian rushed

through the crowd with his arm raised aloft to strike, but a sudden impulse seized him, and letting his arm fall, he observed, "What soft hair he has!" at the same time stroking Wesley's head. A further point is that Wesley, without knowing it, paused outside the house of the mayor. The mob, however, was better informed, and deferred somewhat to law and order as represented by the gentleman in the shop. Wesley deems it worthy of particular notice that the first to relent were the heroes of the town, the invariable captains of the rabble. One of them had been a prize-fighter at the bear-gardens. The rude people respected Wesley's delicacy by not wounding his ears with foul and indecent nicknames. They brought no specific charge against him. But they thirsted for his blood all the same. Tacitus says of the Christian martyrs under Nero that, possessed with an abominable superstition, they were condemned not so much for their supposed crime of firing the city as from the hatred of all mankind. This was precisely the case of the early Methodists. At Leeds the mob in high excitement was ready to knock out their brains for joy that the Duke of Tuscany was emperor. What next?

Although there is abundant evidence that the clergy as a body, when they did not oppose, did not support Wesley, by some of his order he was neither persecuted nor ignored. The Rev. Vincent Perronet, vicar of Shoreham, Kent, in 1745, invited him to preach in his church, but by this time the very name of Wesley was enough, and the favour of a country parson, however pious and venerable, could not save him from the execrations of the vulgar. "As soon as I began to preach, the wild beasts began roaring, stamping, blas-

pheming, ringing the bell, and turning the church into a bear-garden. I spoke on for half an hour, though only the nearest could hear. The rioters followed us to Mr. Perronet's house, raging, threatening, and throwing stones. Charles Perronet hung over me to intercept the blows. They continued their uproar after we got into the house."

Thus the clergy were not all hostile. Neither were Wesley's brother-churchmen alone in rejecting him. The Dissenters displayed much acrimony. Dr. Doddridge was sympathetic, but, as has been before insisted on, the attitude of dignitaries and great men does not always determine the attitude of small men. Persons in high place, and men conspicuous for their talents, usually have the sense to avoid measures likely to damage their reputation. The light that beats on their actions inspires them with caution, and prevents them from yielding too much to passion or prejudice. In that respect Lavington stands forth as a rare and melancholy exception. This consideration does not move to the same degree people in humble stations, and living in remote places, out of the public ken. Experience has taught them what will gain popularity within their immediate circle, and what will be tolerated, and even applauded, within the larger circle bounding their sphere of interest. It is wonderful what mortals will dare when released from effective criticism. Charles Wesley found this to be true of several leading inhabitants of Devizes. "(The rioters) were already wrought up to the proper pitch by the curate and the gentlemen of the town, particularly Mr. Sutton and Mr. Willey, Dissenters, the two leading men. Mr. Sutton frequently came out to the mob to

keep up their spirits. He sent word to Mrs. Phillips, that if she did not turn that fellow out to the mob, he would send them to drag him out. Mr. Willey passed by again and again, assuring the rioters that he would stand by them, do what they would."

The direst results of persecution did not extend to the Wesleys. Often, as soldiers of Christ, they looked death in the face with level eyes and tranquil hearts, but neither of the *par nobile fratrum* was called on to lay down his life for God and Methodism. Providence decreed that they should not die until their work had been accomplished, and their high character, polished manners, respectable station, and beautiful assurance operated as a charm on the savage populace. At Kingswood the Methodist converts were assaulted, but Charles Wesley was immune. At Plymouth Dock John Wesley walked boldly into the thick of the excitement and took the captain of the mob by the hand. This proof of confidence was irresistible. "Sir," said the fellow, "I will see you safe home. No man shall touch you. Gentlemen, give back. I will knock down the first man that touches him."

When the personal glamour was withdrawn, when Methodism was represented by familiar acquaintance, by poor, simple neighbours, distinguished by no fine scholarship or courtly address, matters took another complexion. There was a notion in Wesley's time, as there was in Southey's, that the days of martyrdom were past. Was not the Protestant ascendency secure? Was it not the turn of latitudinarian or Broad Church politics? What cause to fear the rack, the thumbscrew, or the stake, whilst the Georges bore sway? Alas! in his *Farther Appeal* Wesley could cite sickening

instances of the way Methodist women were treated by brave churchmen who never went to church.

"On June 20, 1743, about four in the afternoon they came to the house of Widow Turner, of West Bromwich. They threw in bricks and stones so fast that she was forced to open the door and run out among them. One of her daughters cried out, 'My mother will be killed!' On which they fell to throwing stones at her. . . . The widow asked, 'How can you come and abuse us thus?' On which one came with a large club, and swore if she spoke another word he would knock her on the head and bury her in the ditch.

"On the 19th of June, James Yeoman, of Walsall, saw Mary Bird in her father's house at Wednesbury, and swore, 'By G—, you are there now, but we will kill you to-morrow.' Accordingly, he came with a mob the next day; and after they had broken all the windows, he took up a stone, and said, 'Now, by G—, I will kill you.' He threw it, and struck her on the side of the head. The blood gushed out, and she dropped down immediately."

A little of the admiration so freely bestowed on the Christian virgins who perished nobly in the amphitheatre might well be reserved for the no less heroic Methodist maiden stoned, if not to death, in her father's house. Methodism, however, has crystallised into sects, and Christianity as a whole has scaled heights of worldly grandeur to which particular branches have not yet climbed, and only recently aspired.

Quite astonishing is the casuistry with which even an unworldly writer like "Robertson of Brighton"—a little biassed perhaps by the bigotry of triumphant evangelicalism—distinguishes early Christianity from

early Methodism, the truth being that the analogy between them is, on all points, almost perfect. Thus, in his sermon on *Sensual and Spiritual Excitement*, he says: "The effects are similar. On the day of Pentecost, when the first influences of the Spirit descended on the early Church, the effects resembled intoxication. They were full of the Spirit, and mocking bystanders said, 'These men are full of new wine'; for they found themselves elevated into the ecstasy of a life higher than their own, possessed of powers which they could not control; they spoke incoherently and irregularly; to the most part of those assembled, unintelligibly."

Later, in the discourse he observes, "The misfortune is that men mistake this law of their emotions; and the fatal error is, when having found spiritual feelings existing in connection, and associated, with fleshly sensations, men expect by the mere irritation of the emotions of the frame to reproduce those high and glorious feelings. You might conceive the recipients of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost acting under this delusion; it is conceivable that having observed certain bodily phenomena—for instance, incoherent utterances and thrilled sensibilities coexisting with those sublime spiritualities—they might have endeavoured, by a repetition of those incoherencies, to obtain a fresh descent of the Spirit. In fact, this was exactly what was tried in after ages of the Church. In those events of Church history which are denominated revivals, in the camp of the Methodist and the Ranter, a direct attempt was made to arouse the emotions by exciting addresses and vehement language. Convulsions, shrieks, and violent emotions were produced, and the

unfortunate victims of this mistaken attempt to produce the cause by the effect, fancied themselves, and were pronounced by others, converted. Now the misfortune is, that this delusion is the more easy from the fact that the results of the two kinds of causes resemble each other."

What is infinitely more obvious, and perhaps as great a misfortune, is the result of this method of interpretation. A lenient way of stating this result is to point out that Mary Bird has never, even in a symbolical sense, been canonised. The Methodists are a practical folk, but they would do themselves no harm if they copied Catholic tradition by honouring the memory of that devoted girl.[1]

Like their successors, the early Methodists were not insensible to the worth of strenuous action—one of the chief differences that developed themselves between the daughter Methodism and the parent Moravianism. Wesley, a man of active and sanguine temperament, would never have dreamed of posing as a victim, and many of his disciples—John Nelson, for instance—would have scorned an appeal *ad misericordiam*. Methodist critics have shown themselves far too squeamish towards Southey for dwelling on the joy with which Whitefield, Nelson, and others anticipated afflictions. This joy resembled the joy of battle, and explains the snuff of contempt with which Wesley alludes to the behaviour of certain commanders at the taking of St. Philip's Fort by the French. A force of nearly four thousand British soldiers were eager to drive out the enemy and could have done it in an

[1] The protomartyr of Methodism is said to have been William Seward, stoned to death at Monmouth, in 1741.

hour, but they were told the fort was surrendered and ordered to cease firing. "Oh, human justice!" exclaims Wesley, "one great man is shot, and another is made a lord!"

In his *Journal* Wesley has given us copious extracts from the correspondence of pious campaigners in the Low Countries. These letters, evidently truthful and sincere, prove that, for gallantry and discipline, the canting redcoats could not be surpassed. Methodist soldiers knew how to fight, because they knew how to die. It is so to-day. There are a great many Methodists in the British army, and General Sir W. F. Gatacre recently expressed the wish that there were more. Lord Wolseley also, it is understood, takes considerable interest in Methodist "homes," and fully appreciates Methodist valour.

In Wesley's time the spiritual foe, though hardly from patriotic motives, tried to press Nelson, one of his preachers, into the army, and Maxfield, another of his preachers, into the navy. Kidnapping was, in these instances, equivalent to transportation, the object being to get rid of social pests. These saucy attempts to enrich the services failed.

A third preacher familiar with war's alarms was Alexander Mather, a Scotsman, of whom it is written that he grew up "an utter stranger to the vices common among men." One must assume that this exemplary young man—an Israelite indeed—was somehow persuaded of the justice of the Pretender's claim, for he joined a party of rebels and was present at the battle of Culloden. Fleeing homewards after the rout, he was met by his anxious mother, but his father, highly indignant at the escapade, not only shut the

door in his face, but informed against him. Nevertheless, he escaped the gallows, and after less romantic adventures as a baker, became first a local, and then a travelling, preacher, under Wesley.

Thus we are brought to the highly interesting and highly important topic of the relations between Methodism and the established forms of government, or, in other words, to the political aspect of the movement. Now it is a remarkable circumstance that when he was in Georgia, Wesley was suspected of popery. The ground of the suspicion was the severity of his mode of life, and certainly his rigorous self-discipline accorded better with the rules of some Roman Catholic orders than with the common practice of the Church of England. When he was in Bristol in 1739 a report was current that he was a papist, if not a Jesuit. The report may have come from America, or it may have arisen on the spot. Anyhow, the charge perplexed Wesley, who could not reconcile two such opposites as the doctrine of Justification by Faith—Luther's doctrine, which he adopted and taught—and the popery of the Council of Trent.

The fact is, however, that the multitude does not quibble over points like these. Plain people, unversed in theological distinctions, perceived one thing clearly —that Wesley was spurned on the one hand by the Church, and on the other hand by Dissent. He was not an unbeliever, and therefore he must, by a process of exhaustion, be a Roman Catholic—or on the way to becoming one. It was natural to surmise that community of suffering must tend to produce correspondence of sympathy. Sentiment regarding him ranged from this sort of vague mistrust to the definite

assumption that he was a secret and most able emissary of the Court of Rome, engaged in a dangerous propaganda. Many years later when Wesley was in Ireland, and preaching after his wont, some one inquired whether he was not a papist. "No," said a priest, who was present, "I wish he was."

A papist was *ipso facto* an enemy of England, or, at least, of the existing *régime*. The Pretender was a papist, and anyone belonging, or suspected of belonging, to the Church of Rome, figured in the popular imagination as a sinister object prowling in a dark cloud of religious mystery and political conspiracy. He was not a healthy member of the commonwealth, a trusty liege of the Crown of England. His movements needed watching. He might be Guy Fawkes. The character bestowed on the Methodists has been excellently set forth by Wesley himself. They were "fellows not fit to live; papists, heretics, traitors; conspirators against their king and country."

The habit of field-preaching appeared to some critics incompatible with the safety and honour of the realm. It afforded the enemies of the established Government just such opportunities as they wanted. Evil-minded men, by meeting together in the fields under pretence of religion, might raise riots and tumults. By meeting secretly they might carry on private cabals against the Government. The Methodists themselves were perhaps harmless and loyal people, but what if they were? Disloyal and seditious persons might easily lurk in that vast congregation of eighty thousand attending Whitefield's ministrations, not a tenth of whom he could be reasonably expected to know.

Such apprehensions do not seem to have been

grounded in fact. At any rate Wesley found no difficulty in making out an excellent case in reply. He declared that the assertions—and the eighty thousand, he says, might well have been eighty millions—were made *ad movendam invidiam*, to excite ill-will; and in this he was probably right.

Wesley's *Journal* during the '45 breathes the keenest desire for the king's success, but, owing in part to these amiable *Observations* and the truthful and considerate *Case of the Methodists*, his fame as a rebel was spread through all parts of the kingdom. At Tolcarn, in Cornwall, he was informed that the churchwardens and constables, and all the heads of the parish were waiting for him at the top of the hill. Wesley rode on, and a gentleman said to him, "Sir, I would speak with you a little; let us ride to the gate." They did so, and the stranger observed, "Sir, I will tell you the ground of this. All the gentlemen of these parts say that you have been a long time in France and Spain, and are now sent hither by the Pretender; and that these societies are to join him." "Nay, surely," exclaimed Wesley, "'all the gentlemen in these parts' will not lie against their own conscience!"

Late in the year Wesley was in Cheshire, where he learnt a Dr. C. had been industriously circulating the report that "Mr. Wesley was now with the Pretender, near Edinburgh." The calumniated preacher at once wrote to this well-informed gossip, and expressed the hope that in future he would pay more regard to truth.

Methodism, however, had less to fear from the influence of high politics than from the meddling impertinence of Justice Shallow and the pranks of the beadles. The following vignette of Wesley in old age

will give some idea of the indignities to which he was subjected by the minions of the law. "Passing on a certain occasion a considerable thoroughfare, I was a spectator of the different treatment preachers of the gospel experience in different situations. Being stopped by a crowd, the voice and zeal of an itinerant holder-forth excited my attention. I listened to his extempore harangue, which was animated, sensible, and well delivered. His efforts were fervent, his language clear, and his arguments, drawn from heaven and hell, death and judgment, were affecting. The multitude was motionless and silent, when two beadles made their appearance, suddenly laid hands on the preacher, and led him off (I think illegally) in disgrace. From the same spot a boy might have thrown a stone against a church which affords a sinecure of eight hundred pounds a year to a young Oxonian, who is an excellent shot, and rides the best gelding in a neighbouring county."

The bugbear of beadledom was, in fact, one of the many points of contact between the itinerant preacher and the strolling player, of whose existence in dishabille the satirist writes:

> "The strolling tribe, a despicable race,
> Like wand'ring Arabs, shift from place to place;
> Vagrants by law, to justice open laid,
> They tremble, of the beadle's lash afraid;
> And fawning, cringe, for wretched means of life,
> To madam may'ress or his worship's wife."

An interesting essay might be indited on the relations between Methodism and the stage. It is hardly needful to remind the reader of Whitefield's early predilection, but it is rather odd to find that John Wesley,

the incarnation of godly sincerity, struck contemporaries as *attitudinising*. In 1767, Wesley preached in Lady Huntingdon's chapel at Bath to a select congregation, which included members of the nobility. Among the rest was Horace Walpole, who speaks of the preacher as "a clean, elderly man, fresh-coloured, wondrous clever, but as evidently an actor as Garrick."

The histrionic elements in Methodism inevitably drew the attention of fashion, and it seemed at one time as if the movement would become a veritable "craze." Whitefield was by nature far better qualified to succeed with great personages than Wesley, who, Tory as he was, waxed impatient with giggling ladies and "things called gentlemen," and was never surprised at any exhibition of bad manners, where such were concerned. Whitefield was more tolerant, less critical. If he could sweep an elegant woman into his net, or rather that of the gospel, he deemed it an achievement worthy of some trouble. Was it not said with divine authority that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven? The chief period of this aristocratic "craze" for Methodism was approximately the middle of the century. Whitefield, who divided his activities between England and America, was now in the former country. Chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon,—most eminent of Methodist dames, and one who aspired to the character of heresiarch, as heresy was understood by Samuel Wesley, the younger, —the eloquent preacher formed many connections with the *haute noblesse*, whose morals badly needed mending.

In a brace of letters, dated 1749, Walpole, who had a keen eye for foibles, discourses as follows: "Method-

ism in the metropolis is more fashionable than anything but brag. The women play very deep at both; as deep, it is much suspected, as the matrons of Rome did at the mysteries of the *Bona Dea*. If gracious Anne were alive, she would make an admirable defendress of the new faith, and build fifty more churches for the female proselytes." Again, he says: "If you ever think of returning to England, you must prepare yourself with Methodism. This sort increases as fast almost as any religious nonsense ever did. Lady Frances Shirley has chosen this way of bestowing the dregs of her beauty; and Mr. Lyttelton is very near making the same sacrifice of the dregs of all those characters he has worn. The Methodists love your big sinners, as proper subjects to work on; and, indeed, they have a plentiful harvest. Flagrancy was never more in fashion; drinking is at the highest wine-mark; and gaming is joined with it so violently that, at the last Newmarket meeting, a bank bill was thrown down, and nobody immediately claiming it, they agreed to give it to a man standing by."

Methodism, however, was a cult which, though it might serve the rich as a transient craze, remained as a lasting heritage of the poor. An acute observer of men and things—the author of *Lacon*—remarks: "In addressing a multitude, we must remember to follow the advice that Cromwell gave his soldiers, 'Fire low!' This is the great art of the Methodists." But Methodism did not stop there. It made preaching friars of its converts, and after they were dead, placed them in its calendar of saints. It has lavished hero-worship on eccentric persons like Billy Bray—God's fools. It is probable that no religious community can

boast a richer stock of folk-lore in proportion to its length of life than the various branches of Methodism. How far this lore is calculated, as fact or fiction, to attract the world in general, it is hard to decide. The element of association is important, but much depends on the mode of presentation, on the author, the artist. Within the fold characterisations of old-world Methodism, in the form of tales and idylls, obtain an immense vogue. Mr. Pearse has achieved notable successes in this direction. Of late years Mr. Lowry, Mr. Harry Lindsay, and others have endeavoured to win suffrages for Methodist literary art outside the pale.

This love of homeliness, of blended quaintness and kindliness, resulting in the glorification of odd, obscure, illiterate people, goes back to the primitive age of Methodist history. Hannah More has dealt with the "Shepherd of Salisbury Plain," and there were other prophets of about his standing. The spiritual authority of these teachers sometimes conflicted with their *quotidianus usus*, with the duties and relations of their secular calling. The opponents of Methodism were not slow to avail themselves of this opportunity, and lampooned the professors of the new religion in verse and prose. Smollett's novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, contains many allusions to Methodism in connection with the aristocracy. Among the rest is the following excerpt from a letter supposed to have been written by Sir Watkin Phillips, of Jesus College, Oxford:—

"Turning down a narrow lane, behind Long Acre, we perceived a crowd of people standing at a door: which, it seems, opened into a kind of Methodist meeting, and were informed that a footman was then

holding forth to the congregation within. Curious to see this phenomenon, we squeezed into the place with much difficulty; and who should this preacher be but the identical Humphry Clinker! He had finished his sermon and given out a psalm, the first stave of which he sung with peculiar graces. But if we were astonished to see Clinker in the pulpit, we were altogether confounded at finding all the females of our family among the audience. There was Lady Griskin, Mrs. Tabitha Bramble, Mrs. Winifred Jenkins, my sister Liddy, and Mr. Barton, and all of them joined in the psalmody with strong marks of devotion.

"I could hardly keep my gravity on this ludicrous occasion, but old Squaretoes was differently affected. The first thing that struck him was the presumption of his lacquey, whom he commanded to come down with such as air of authority as Humphry did not think proper to disregard. He descended immediately, and all the people were in commotion. Barton looked exceedingly sheepish, Lady Griskin flirted her fan, Mrs. Tabby groaned in spirit, Liddy changed countenance, and Mrs. Jenkins sobbed as if her heart were breaking. My uncle, with a sneer, asked pardon of the ladies for having interrupted their devotion, saying that he had particular business with the preacher, whom he ordered to call a hackney coach. . . . .

"When we arrived at our lodgings, he commanded Mr. Clinker to attend him upstairs, and spoke to him in these words: 'Since you are called upon by the Spirit to preach and to teach, it is high time to lay aside the livery of an earthly master; and, for my part, I am unworthy to have an apostle in my service.' 'I hope,' said Humphry, 'I have not failed in my

duty to your honour. I should be a vile wretch if I did, considering the misery from which your charity and compassion relieved me. But having an admonition of the Spirit'—'An admonition of the Devil!' cried the Squire, in a passion. 'What admonition, you blockhead! What right has such a fellow as you to set up for a reformer?' 'Begging your honour's pardon,' replied Clinker, 'may not the light of God's grace shine upon the poor and the ignorant in their humility, as well as upon the wealthy, and the philosopher in all his pride of human learning?' 'What you imagine to be the new light of grace,' said his master, 'I take to be a deceitful vapour, glimmering through a crack in your upper storey. In a word, Mr. Clinker, I will have no light in my family but what pays the king's taxes, unless it be the light of reason, which you don't pretend to follow.'"

This was a game in which a man of the world, with a decided bias against the movement, appeared from the outset to hold a winning advantage. Of all the weapons with which Methodism could be assailed, ridicule was the keenest, the easiest, and in a sense the most just. Nascent causes, like rising politicians, cannot, and perhaps should not, escape this ordeal. It is a test of sense, and strength, and sincerity. Quite early in his career Wesley engaged in a passage of arms with the celebrated Beau Nash, and the upshot proved that a strong, sincere, and sensible man, with an old woman as ally, could vanquish so severe an *arbiter elegantiarum*, so famous a master of ceremonies as the King of Bath.

"There was a great expectation at Bath of what a noted man was to do to me there; and I was much

entreated not to preach, because no one knew what might happen. By this report I also gained a much larger audience, among whom were many of the rich and great. I told them plainly the Scripture had concluded them all under sin—high and low, rich and poor, one with another. Many of them seemed to be a little surprised, and were sinking apace into seriousness, when their champion appeared, and coming close to me, asked by what authority I did those things. I replied, 'By the authority of Jesus Christ, conveyed to me by the (now) Archbishop of Canterbury, when he laid hands upon me, and said, "Take thou authority to preach the gospel."' He said, 'This is contrary to Act of Parliament. This is a conventicle.' I answered, 'Sir, the conventicles mentioned in that Act (as the preamble shows) are seditious meetings, but this is not such. Here is no shadow of sedition; therefore it is not contrary to that Act.' He replied, 'I say it is, and besides, your preaching frightens people out of their wits.' 'Sir, did you hear me preach?' 'No.' 'How then can you judge of what you never heard?' 'Sir, by common report.' 'Common report is not enough. Give me leave, sir, to ask, Is not your name Nash?' 'My name is Nash.' 'Sir, I dare not judge of you by common report. I think it is not enough to judge by.' Here he paused awhile, and having recovered himself, said, 'I desire to know what this people comes here for.' On which one replied, 'Sir, leave him to me. Let an old woman answer him. You, Mr. Nash, take care of your body. We take care of our souls, and for the food of our souls we come here.' He replied not a word, but walked away."

CHAPTER VI

MIRACLES AND MYSTERIES

Middleton's *Free Enquiry*—A Mediæval Miracle—An Eighteenth-Century Miracle—"Methodism Displayed"—Wesley on Miracles—Wesley on Enthusiasm—A Parallel from Plato—Sortilege—Karlstadt and Bell—Quietism and Methodism—Christian Perfection—Renan's Philosophy—Amusements—Collision with the Moravians—Courtships—Marriage.

FROM an orthodox Protestant standpoint it is hard to conceive a more mischievous work than Dr. Conyers Middleton's *Free Enquiry*, published in 1749. The object of this work was to minimise the miraculous element in religion, to confine it within the narrowest historical limits; or, failing that, to concede the Roman claims. In seeking to attain this object, the author found it necessary to introduce many passages derogatory to primitive Christianity. The point of view is that of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and of Kingsley's *Hypatia*. We encounter a low and pestilent superstition, interpreted by unsympathetic observers. "The Christian workers of miracles were always charged with imposture by their adversaries. Lucian tells us, 'Whenever any crafty juggler went to the Christians, he grew rich immediately.' And Celsus represents the Christian wonder-workers as mere vagabonds and

common cheats, who rambled about to fairs and markets." Wesley was so moved with indignation that he answered Middleton's production in a treatise of considerable length, abounding in tart rejoinders and pungent sarcasms.

The Catholic Church has never abandoned its belief in the possibility of miracles; and the truth or falsehood of alleged miraculous occurrences was one of the questions that divided Protestants and papists at the time of the Reformation. The following episode in the life of Guillaume Farel, a noble Frenchman, is borrowed from D'Aubigné for the purpose of establishing an analogy.

"Four leagues to the south of Gap, near Tallard, on a hill that rises above the impetuous stream of the Durance, was a place in great repute, named Sainte Croix (holy cross). William was only seven or eight years old when his father and mother resolved to take him thither on a pilgrimage. 'The cross in that place,' they told him, 'is made of the very wood on which Christ was crucified."

"The family began their journey, and at last reached the highly venerated cross, before which they all fell prostrate. After gazing for a time on the sacred wood and the copper of the cross, the latter being made (as the priest told them) of the basin in which Christ washed His apostles' feet, the pilgrims turned their eyes to a small crucifix attached to the cross. 'When the devils send us hail and thunder,' continued the priest, 'this crucifix moves about so violently that it seems to get loose from the cross, as if desirous of running at the devil, and it continues throwing out sparks of fire against the storm. If

it were not for this, nothing would be left upon earth.'

"The pious pilgrims were deeply moved by the account of these wonderful prodigies. 'No one,' continued the priest, 'sees or knows aught of these things except myself and this man.' The pilgrims turned their heads, and saw a strange-looking person standing near them. 'It was frightful to look at him,' said Farel. White scales covered the pupils of his eyes, 'whether they were there in reality, or Satan made them appear so.' This extraordinary man, whom the incredulous denominated 'the priest's wizard,' on being appealed to by the latter, immediately replied that the prodigy was true."

If Wesley had lived in the sixteenth century, it is as absolutely certain as anything human can be that he would have implicitly received this amazing narrative. In his *Journal* for 1761 he solemnly records his belief in a narrative not less amazing. Jonas Rushford, a boy of fourteen, told him that, a year before, he had been requested by two neighbours to go with them to a Mr. Crowther's at Skipton. A man had been missing for twenty days, and Mr. Crowther declined to talk about him. He, however, commanded these two persons to bring a boy of twelve or thirteen, and they brought Jonas Rushford.

When they entered, Crowther was engaged, harmlessly or otherwise, in reading a book, but he dropped the book, put Jonas to bed, placed a looking-glass in his hand, and covered him up. The boy was then asked whom he would like to see. He replied "My mother." Presently he saw her. She had a lock of wool in her hand, and was standing in

the very place and dressed in the very clothes of life, as was afterwards learnt from the apparition herself.

Jonas was now bidden to look for the man that was missing—a neighbour of theirs. He looked and saw him riding towards Idle. He was very drunk. Stopping at the alehouse, he drank two pints more, and pulled out a guinea, intending to get it changed. Two men stood by—one a big, the other a little man. They went on and procured two hedge-stakes. When he reached the top of the hill on Windle Common, they pulled the drunkard off his horse, killed him and threw the body into a coal-pit. Jonas deposed that he beheld everything as plainly as if he had been by, and that, if he saw the men, he should know them again.

They returned to Bradford the same night, and on the morrow the boy repaired with his neighbours to the spot where the man of the mirror had been killed, and pointed out the pit into which the body had been thrown. A man thereupon descended, and lo and behold! the corpse was brought to the surface. It was exactly as Jonas had told them. A handkerchief was tied about the dead man's mouth, and fastened behind his neck.

"Is it improbable, or flatly impossible," asks Wesley, "when all the circumstances are considered, that this should be all pure fiction? They that can believe this may believe a man's getting into a bottle." Probably he considered this one of those "lying wonders, diabolical miracles, or works beyond the virtue of natural causes, wrought by the power of evil spirits," which he not only accepted him-

self, but received for others—just as if they were axioms.

The truth is that Wesley was so impressed with the reality, universality, and constant operation of spiritual agencies, that material obstacles dwindled away to nought. He had hardly any sense of antecedent improbability, but the likelihood of an event being supernatural was, in his eyes, much enhanced where moral considerations came into play, where the kingdom of God was served, where Methodism obtained striking attestation of divine approval and protection. On November 2, 1743, there was published at Newcastle the following advertisement:—

FOR THE BENEFIT OF MR. ESTE.

By the Edinburgh Company of Comedians, on

Friday, November 4,

will be acted a Comedy, called

THE CONSCIOUS LOVERS;

To which will be added a Farce, called

TRICK UPON TRICK, OR METHODISM DISPLAYED.

This might be described as a test case. If the Almighty saw fit to intervene and express by some overt act His condemnation of the procedure, then Methodism, still in its first youth, would derive encouragement from the token, and go on its way rejoicing. Wesley has not stated whether he hoped for such recognition —the ways of Providence are mysterious—but he was able to set down some remarkable occurrences as having taken place in the course of the performance.

An immense crowd of spectators assembled in the Moot Hall. Of the fifteen hundred people computed to be present, some hundreds occupied rows of seats on the stage. The play had no sooner begun to be acted than these seats collapsed, precipitating the occupants several feet. Nobody, however, was hurt, and, as the audience remained cool, the play was resumed. In the middle of the second act, the shilling seats gave a crack, and sank some inches. A partial panic ensued, and, amidst shrieks and confusion, troops of people left the hall, and did not return. The actors went on. At the commencement of the third act, the stage sank about six inches, and the players beat a retreat. They again appeared, but before they reached the end of the act, sustained a third check. Without a note of warning, the sixpenny seats fell to the ground.

The audience was now fairly alarmed. It was believed that many had been crushed to death. The notion proved false, and as two or three hundred still lingered in the hall, Mr. Este came on the stage, and announced his determination that the farce should be played. He was in the act of speaking, when the stage sank another six inches. Thereupon he retired in great haste, and the remains of the audience made for the doors.

"Which is most surprising," says Wesley, "that those players acted this farce the next week, or that some hundreds of people came again to see it?" If Wesley did not mean that persons guilty of such presumption were challenging the fate of the unhappy creatures on whom the Tower of Siloam fell, he clearly implied that they ought to have accepted the successive interrup-

tions as proofs of their own folly and wickedness in patronising the entertainment. Probably, however, he intended both meanings.

To-day the verdict will be that the playgoers were right, and that Wesley was wrong. They, it will be said, showed common sense in not permitting themselves to be unduly alarmed by structural defects which might be remedied, or their pleasures to be defeated by accidents that need not recur. Wesley, on the other hand, was superstitious, and did not allow for coincidence. Anyhow, he was consistent, which many of his critics are not. Wesley would not have liked to be called superstitious — he was enough a child of the age for that — but he was always far more afraid of being ungodly than of being credulous.

Christianity rested on faith, and Wesley could not see why faith should be exercised in respect of events that occurred more than a thousand years before, and not in respect of contemporary incidents. He deemed it just as reasonable to admit Jonas Rushford's story as to admit the very similar story of the Witch of Endor's interview with King Saul. There is really no logical halting-place between this attitude of frank affirmation and the late Master of Balliol's attitude of pure negation—miracles do not happen.

Wesley did not believe in a God who was the slave of law. In his *Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained* he remarks: "I do not know that God hath any way precluded Himself from thus exerting His sovereign power, from working miracles in any kind or degree, in any age, to the end of the world. I do not recollect any scripture wherein we are taught that

miracles were to be confined within the limits either of the apostolic or the Cyprianic age; or to any period of time, longer or shorter, even till the restitution of all things. I have not observed, either in the Old Testament or the New, any intimation at all of this kind. St. Paul says, indeed, once, concerning two of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (so, I think, that text is usually understood), 'Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be tongues, they shall cease.' But he does not say, either that these or any other miracles shall cease, till faith or hope shall cease also, till they all be swallowed up in the vision of God, and love be all in all."

Wesley was perfectly conscious of the effect of these admissions. He knew that, by extending the practice of faith to the present, when others, more cautious, limited its working to the dim past or the dim future, he caused himself to be regarded as a peculiarly objectionable sort of visionary. With his love of logical precision, he puts his opponents' case in the following form:—

"He that believes those are miraculous cures which are not so, is a rank enthusiast; but

"You believe those are miraculous cures which are not so; therefore you are a rank enthusiast."

It may be observed in passing that the Methodist leader speaks with great contempt of the general body of the clergy. That his severity was justified there can be no manner of doubt, though exception might perhaps be made in favour of London. Be that as it may, it is certain that few clerks in holy orders would have cared to try a fall with Wesley in the palæstra of open controversy, and those who did trusted more to

ridicule than to logic or to learning. Wesley was not merely dexterous at fence, a casuist to make black white and the worse to appear the better reason; he was armed cap-a-pie with ecclesiastical and general lore. The masked criticasters, who essayed the part of histriomastix in the London *Chronicle* and other journals, were flogged with enormous gusto by the irrepressible logician. His irony at times is positively Socratic.

"I was long in hopes of seeing an answer to this artful performance from someone of more leisure as well as abilities; and someone whose name would have recommended his work. For that thought has something of truth in it:

> 'Oh what a tuneful wonder seiz'd the throng,
> When Marlbro's conquering name alarm'd the foe!
> Had Whiznowhisky led the armies on,
> The general's scarecrow name had foil'd each blow.'

However, who knows but reason for once may be stronger than prejudice?"

Now Methodism was then, and still is in some quarters, a synonym for ignorance. Enthusiasm was deemed incompatible with strength of mind. It is not surprising therefore that Wesley, who never shrank from investigating facts, should devote a whole sermon to the natural history of this phenomenon, with which, contrary to his wishes, his name and cause had come to be associated. This, in many respects model, discourse defines all that the term ever did, or ever can, denote. As he justly remarks, there have been attached to it different significations—significations so different as to be mutually exclusive. Any large dictionary of the language will prove that, though

nowadays the circumstance is apt to be forgotten by reason of the unanimity that prevails in the use of the word. In Wesley's time the opposite was the case, and he has done well to instance, for the instruction of posterity as well as for the guidance of contemporaries, the various senses in which the term might be and was employed in the eighteenth century.

"Some take it in a good sense for a divine impulse or impression, superior to all the natural faculties, and suspending for the time, either in whole or in part, both the reason and the outward senses. In this meaning of the word both the prophets of old and the apostles were proper enthusiasts, being at divers times so filled with the Spirit and so influenced by Him who dwelt in their hearts that the exercise of their own reason, their senses, and all their natural faculties being suspended, they were wholly actuated by God, and 'spake only' as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

"Others take it in an indifferent sense, such as is neither morally good nor evil. Thus they speak of the enthusiasm of the poets—of Homer and Virgil, in particular. And this a late eminent writer extends so far as to assert that there is no man excellent in his profession, whatsoever it be, who has not in his temper a strong tincture of enthusiasm. By enthusiasm these appear to understand an uncommon vigour of thought, a peculiar fervour of spirit, a vivacity and strength not to be found in common men, elevating the soul to greater and higher things than cool reason could have attained.

"But neither of these is the sense wherein the word 'enthusiasm' is most usually understood. The gener-

ality of men, if no further agreed, at least agree thus far concerning it that it is something evil. And this is plainly the sentiment of all those who call the religion of the heart enthusiasm. Accordingly, I shall take it in the following pages as an evil, a misfortune, if not a fault.

"As to the nature of enthusiasm, it is undoubtedly a disorder of the mind; and such a disorder as greatly hinders the exercise of reason. Nay, sometimes it wholly sets it aside. It not only dims, but shuts the eyes of the understanding. It may therefore well be accounted a species of madness. . . . Enthusiasm in general may be described in some such a manner as this: A religious madness arising from some falsely-imagined influence or inspiration of God; at least, from imputing something to God which ought not to be imputed to Him, or expecting something from God which ought not to be expected from Him."

Wesley then proceeds to state some of the innumerable forms of enthusiasm, not omitting to deliver a sharp retort to those who, as he says, "imagined themselves Christians, and were not." This was the class most addicted to calling his followers enthusiasts, and he speaks of their religion as "palpable, glaring inconsistency," as "an awkward mixture of real heathenism and imaginary Christianity." He adds, "Yet still, as you have so vast a majority on your side, you will always carry it by dint of numbers that you are the only men in your senses, and all are lunatics who are not as you are."

Earlier in the discourse Wesley remarks, "It is easy to observe that the determinate thing which the world accounts madness is that utter contempt of all spiritual

things and steady pursuit of things eternal; that divine conviction of things not seen; that rejoicing in the favour of God; and that testimony of His Spirit with our spirits that we are the children of God—that is, in truth, the whole spirit, and life, and power of the religion of Jesus Christ." Now it is not, perhaps, very likely that Wesley, when he penned these words, had any distinct or vivid remembrance of Plato's *Phædrus*. If the fashion of that subtly imagined and exquisitely beautiful work had been present to his mind, he would naturally have alluded to it, when speaking of the favourable sense in which the word enthusiasm was sometimes, though in his day seldom, understood. Nevertheless, there exists an interesting parallel between the above passage in Wesley's sermon on Enthusiasm and a passage in Plato's treatise on the Soul. The world becomes "the many." The phrase "that utter contempt of all temporal things and steady pursuit of things eternal," appears in the Greek as "quitting human pursuits and cleaving to the divine." Anyone behaving in this way is rebuked by "the many" as mad, whereas he is only, as Horace Walpole would have said, "acting ugly enthusiasm." "The divine conviction of things not seen" becomes in Platonic phraseology, "the recollecting of those things which our soul once saw." The other clauses are represented partly by similar clauses in the Greek, partly by the trend of the passage, which well deserves to be compared. Even the doctrine of Christian Perfection which Wesley held to be the peculiar heritage of the Methodists, is countenanced in a sentence hardly, alas! translatable.

Such is enthusiasm as understood by enthusiasts.

Wesley, however, leant, on the ground of usage, to the worst construction of the term as the more common. He speaks of "the dreadful effects of that many-headed monster Enthusiasm," and he liked it no better than the soberest of his contemporaries. Where eighteenth-century writers used the word enthusiasm, we should generally say "fanaticism." We cannot help ourselves, for now "enthusiasm" is hardly ever employed except in a good sense. Voltaire explains the difference as follows: "Fanaticism is to superstition what a delirium is to a fever, and fury to anger. He who has ecstasies and visions, who takes dreams for realities, and his imaginations for prophecies, is an enthusiast; and he who sticks not at supporting his folly by murder is a fanatic. Bartholomew Diaz, a fugitive at Nuremberg, who was firmly convinced that the pope is the Antichrist in the Revelations, was only an enthusiast, whereas his brother, who set out from Rome with the godly intention of murdering him, and who actually did murder him for God's sake, was one of the most execrable fanatics superstition could form."

In his sermon on Enthusiasm, Wesley describes as enthusiasts persons "who imagine that they either do or shall receive *particular directions* from God, not only in points of importance, but in things of no moment, in the most trifling circumstances of life. Whereas in these cases God has given us our own reason for a guide, though never excluding the secret assistance of His Spirit. . . . Perhaps some may ask, 'Ought we not then to inquire what is the will of God in all things? And ought not His will to be the rule of our practice?' Unquestionably it ought. But

how is a sober Christian to make this inquiry, to know what is the will of God? Not by waiting for supernatural dreams; not by expecting God to reveal it in visions; not by looking for any *particular impressions* or sudden impulses on his mind. No; but by consulting the oracles of God. 'To the law and to the testimony!'"

It might be supposed that in this and the ensuing paragraphs Wesley advanced nothing that could be twisted by the most ingenious misrepresentation into encouragement of superstitious practices. The expressions are so guarded and yet so explicit. The words italicised seem fatal to religious trickery; and the regulation of conduct appears based on broad principles to be ascertained by the diligent study of the Bible. At first sight this commends itself as the only possible interpretation of the saying, "To the law and to the testimony!" On further examination, however, it becomes evident that the words refer to the custom of sortilege so prevalent among the Methodists. Wesley himself indulged in this practice, and not very honestly either. When a text did not suit him, he rejected it, and continued searching in the hope that the Scriptures might show themselves favourable to his momentary inclination. This was notably the case on the occasion when Whitefield invited him to Bristol. The sacred oracles were distinctly adverse, and not only adverse, but contradictory. Thus the first text declared, "And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him," but another stated, "I will show him what great things he must suffer for My name's sake." However, the general character of the texts pointed to immedi-

ate death as the consequence, if Wesley responded to Whitefield's call.

"Get thee up into this mountain, and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people."

"And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days."

"When wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed, shall I not now require his blood at your hands, and take you away from the earth?"

"Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem."

Before this formidable array of texts Wesley naturally quailed. In the end, as we have seen, he accepted the invitation. He was not martyred, and this proof that God does not smile on such attempts to penetrate the veil of futurity ought to have satisfied him that the practice was wrong and foolish. How wrong and foolish it might become was made manifest in Mr. Lackington. When he was young, the bookseller was locked up that he might not attend a Methodist meeting at Taunton. In a fit of superstition he opened the Bible for directions what to do. He lit on the words: "He hath given His angels charge concerning thee, lest at any time thou shouldest dash thy foot against a stone." "This," he says, "was quite enough for me. So, without a moment's hesitation, I ran up two pairs of stairs to my own room, and out of the window I leaped, to the great terror of my poor mistress." Lackington, though not killed, was much bruised, and not being able to rise, was carried back into the house. As the result of this escapade, he had to keep his bed

This seems to show that he did not approve, and, so far as his authority went, would not permit gratuitous extravagance. His critics, though able to point to cases like Bell's, were deficient—perhaps wantonly deficient—in the sense of proportion, and unable—perhaps wantonly unable—to distinguish between things that differ.

In that remarkable work *John Inglesant*, the finest spiritual romance of our time, occurs the following passage relating to the Quietists:—"God seemed to have revealed Himself to thousands in such a fashion as to make their past lives and worship seem profitless and unfruitful before the brightness and peace that was revealed; and the lords of His heritage seemed for a time to be willing that the light should shine. It appeared for a moment as if Christendom were about to shake off its shackles, its infant swaddling clothes, in which it had been so long wrapped, and acknowledging that the childhood of the Church was past, stand forth before God with her children around her, no longer distrusted and enslaved, but each individually complete, fellow-citizens with their mother of the household of God. The unsatisfactory rotation of formal penitence and sinful lapse, of wearisome devotion and stale pleasures, had given place to an enthusiasm which believed that, instead of ceremonies and bowing in outer courts, the soul was introduced into heavenly places, and saw God face to face. A wonderful experience, in exchange for lifeless formality and rule, of communion with the Lord, with nothing before the believer, as he knelt at the altar, save the Lord Himself day by day, unshackled by penance and confession as heretofore. But it was

only for a moment that this bright prospect was opened to the Church. The Jesuits and Benedictines began to be alarmed, and the Inquisition was brought to bear on the adherents of the sect."

A little later Mr. Shorthouse speaks of the "undoubted extravagance," of which the Quietists, in common with other mystics, were occasionally guilty, and which helps to explain the alarm of the two orders, just as Brother Bell's vagaries help to explain the prejudice against Methodism. Comparing the Church of Rome with the Church of England, Macaulay remarks on the superior astuteness of the former in comprehending religious enthusiasts. It is doubtful, however, whether the pope would long have tolerated Methodism. It is evident that he did not tolerate Quietism, from which Methodism is, on one side, lineally descended. Madame Guyon, whose writings Wesley edited, was persecuted by Bossuet. This lady was influenced by Molinos, and she in turn influenced Fénelon, who was also persecuted. There was a limit to Roman, as there was to Anglican, graciousness. On the other hand, Wesley's autocratic demeanour towards persons like Bell led critics to tax him, not very unjustly, with exercising a kind of popedom over them.

The errors of both Bell and Karlstadt were closely connected with the doctrine of Christian Perfection, which, again, is closely connected with the rise of genuine enthusiasm. If a man is enthusiastic in any pursuit—music, or morals, art, or politics, or sport—he will seek to be perfect in it. He will not be hindered by scientific demonstration that perfection is only a dream, an ideal; and, for the purpose of his ambition, he will

refuse to believe that perfection is unattainable. As our Lord Himself commanded His disciples "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect," it is hard to see how this cheerful and inspiring doctrine can be left out of any scheme of Christianity professing to be complete. That its adoption may tend to make some men conceited, and others uncharitable, is no valid objection. Wesley nowhere showed his greatness more than in declining to be moved by cavils. He would never sacrifice substance to shadow, or history to incident.

Still the question remains—What sort of Christian Perfection? Certainly not that of Karlstadt, which, by substitution of grace for law, by idolatry of private judgment, paved the way for the introduction of the harem. Certainly not that of George Bell expressing itself in indecorous ritual and affectation of "tongues." What Wesley intended by Christian Perfection was a certain innocence, and this apparently was our Lord's meaning, since He set a child in the midst of His disciples and declared that of such was the kingdom of heaven. But how can such innocence consist with the ways of the world, with the corruptions of society? Ascetics of every school deny the possibility, and equally men of the world exclude perfection from the sphere of morals. They aim rather at a *via media*, at a working compromise as alone compatible with the weakness of human nature.

Philosophers of our own time, in somewhat of the spirit that brought about the Renaissance, inform us that, if we wish to be happy, we must not be too good. This opinion seems to have been held very firmly by the late M. Renan. Writing in the *North American*

Review for January 1899, M. Max O'Rell expounds the great French master's philosophy of life in the following sentences:—"Ernest Renan loved humanity with all its weaknesses, even because of its weaknesses. He held that people are often lovable on account of a hundred little failings and weaknesses. He sometimes pitied the world, but never scolded it. He was a great, gentle, lofty spirit, the greatest thinker and scholar of his time, who thought like a man, felt like a woman, sometimes acted like a child, and always wrote like an angel. Through his genius the world has been made happier and better. 'I am cheerful,' once wrote Renan, 'because, having had few amusements when young, I have kept my illusions in all their freshness.'

"Children are happy and cheerful because they are full of illusions, of belief and confidence. When we are told in the Gospel of St. Matthew, that 'except we become as little children, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,' I am disposed to interpret the verse: 'Except we become as little children, confident, believing, and unconscious of malice, we shall not be happy in this world.' When I read, 'Happy are the poor in spirit, because they shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,' I am disposed to say, 'Happy are those who are determined not to know all the truths in life, because they shall be happy in the world.'

"Renan would say to you, 'Don't take life too seriously. When you are old you will remember life with pleasure only by the hundreds of little follies you have indulged in, by the hundreds of innocent little temptations you have succumbed to. Avoid perfect people and angels of all sorts—this side of the grave.

Man will never be perfect; love him with all his imperfections. Never resist impulses of generosity. They will make you cheerful, nay, healthy. They will give colour to your cheeks and prevent your flesh, in old age, from turning into yellow, dried up parchment. Come home with your pockets full of presents for the children. Let them put their little hands right down to the bottom of those pockets. You will be repaid, amply repaid, by their holding up their little round faces, to thank you in anticipation of what they know you have done for them.'"

Renan's, or perhaps M. O'Rell's, exegetics need not be discussed. They will no doubt offend tender and susceptible minds averse from materialising or *terrestrialising* Scripture. But, apart from exegetics, most wholesome individuals will find much to approve in M. O'Rell's deliverance, and even rigid Methodists, though they may not altogether bless, will assuredly not altogether curse the Frenchman. The evangelist will be prepared to love the sinner with all his imperfections. The paterfamilias, it is more than likely, is already addicted to the pleasant customs specified for our imitation. Between Renan and Methodism there exists no antagonism—outside theology. By Methodism is intended the Methodism of to-day. Between Wesley and Renan yawns a huge chasm, even as regards matters concerning which the common sense of humanity is explicit, positive. Out of deference to his mother, or his mother's dust, Wesley refused to condemn card-playing, but he condemned amusements *en bloc*. The sentiments of the early Methodists on this point are well expressed in one of their hymns:

"No room for mirth or trifling here,
For worldly hope or worldly fear,
If life so soon be gone."

Many good Methodists have lived and died in this spirit. Regarding themselves as strictly on probation, they have chosen to treat all forms of pleasure not identified with the exercises of religion as, in all probability, wiles of the devil. Here again Methodism is in line with primitive Christianity. "If any be merry let him sing psalms." In practice, Christian Perfection has been sought, by the avoidance not only of acknowledged vices, but of what are called *doubtful* amusements. These are, primarily, games of hazard, attendance at the theatre, and dancing. Persons who indulge in these pleasures are considered as not on the road to Christian Perfection; many Methodists would say that they were not Christians at all.

Much of the odium that clings to the name "Methodist" has sprung from the zeal with which Wesley and his followers have combated what are, to the natural man, indispensable gratifications. At Hayfield, in 1755, Wesley preached the funeral sermon of Miss Baddiley, the incumbent's favourite daughter. During the discourse he referred to the text in Ecclesiastes, in which we are plainly told that "there is a time to dance." Wesley was doubtful about this. "I know of no such time," he said, "except it be a time analogous to that in which David danced before the ark. Be careful that you don't dance yourselves into hell." This severe morality exasperated the parishioners, who loved dancing as much as Wesley loved preaching; and a dancing-master was imported, by way of retort. The dancing was carried on in an alehouse.

Now it so happened that the innkeeper had an only child, who could not endure the squeaking of the fiddles and the general hilarity. They seem to have affected him with a sort of neuralgia. The consequence was that, although he was confined in a back kitchen, the boy escaped, and, on a search being made, was found drowned in an adjoining river. As Mr. Tyerman speaks of the country people "tripping on light fantastic toe the downward path to the place of horrors," it may be assumed that he, in common with Wesley and Baddiley, conceived of the innkeeper's loss as retribution.

It is highly questionable whether the majority of men will endorse this view. "Dancing, like laughter, is instinctive as the expression of joy. Suppress dancing, and you suppress joy. Suppress joy, and you suppress good-temper." That will be the argument. Bishop Heber, author of that fine missionary hymn, "From Greenland's icy mountains," favoured, not abstinence, but temperance. His widow writes: "Although his mind was deeply imbued with devotional feelings, he considered a moderate participation in what are usually called 'worldly amusements' as allowable and blameless." And again, "He thought that the strictness which made no distinction between things blamable only in their abuse and the practices which were really immoral, was prejudicial to the interests of true religion; and on this point his opinion remained unchanged to the last. His own life, indeed, was a proof that amusements so participated in may be perfectly harmless, and no way interfere with any religious or moral duty."

The truth is that on the subject of amusements—

their kind, their amount—no definite rule can be laid down. Those there are—Wesley himself was one—who are so absorbed in a particular quest—Wesley in seeking souls—that they are impatient of any and every check, and each irrelevant pleasure is felt to be a hindrance. Others are of a different constitution, and love variety. In any case, the coercion of youth, to which hardly any pleasure is irrelevant, is a matter requiring tact and discretion. To say "Be careful that you don't dance yourselves into hell" is to blunder monstrously.

In one of his pre-Roman essays, Newman discourses with admirable lucidity on the essential, the incorrigible irreligion of young men. As Wesley grew older, he evinced symptoms of tolerance, and even sympathy, for wilful and wayward youth. On Monday, June 7, 1762, he entered in his diary, "I met a large number of children just as much acquainted with God and the things of God as a wild ass's colt, and just as much concerned about them. And yet who can believe that those pretty little creatures have the wrath of God abiding on them?" When he was past eighty he wrote: "On Sunday, March 18, 1787, I met the single women of the society [at Spitalfields] and advised them to make full use of the advantages they enjoyed, but I doubt not many had ears to hear:

'For when had youth the leisure to be wise?'"

Wesley once said that he and leisure had long since parted company, but that, of course, was in the opposite sense.

There is little doubt that, in its treatment of amusements, Methodism has been unnecessarily strict; and

the result in many cases must have been to induce an unsocial and censorious frame of mind. "Mixed dancing" is a phrase that has an ugly sound, but in practice the social intercourse of the sexes is to be encouraged, as tending to banish morbid thoughts, and as fostering a kindly and hospitable tone between neighbours. At the same time there is evident objection, even from a hedonist's standpoint, to a life of pure pleasure-seeking. Did not Renan observe, "I am cheerful because, having had few amusements when young, I have kept my illusions in all their freshness?" In that sense, Methodism was right.

The tenet of Christian Perfection, on its ethical as well as on its doctrinal side, brought Wesley, at quite an early period, into collision with his friends the Moravians. It occasioned, in fact, a complete rupture of their relations. We find him taxing the Brethren with conformity to the world, with useless and trifling conversation, with levity in their general behaviour, with joining in diversions in order to do good, with not reproving sin — conduct wholly inconsistent with Christian Perfection except as it might be defined by the Jesuits who, to be sure, believed in the perfectibility of human nature. The doctrine of Christian Perfection, however, formed no part of Moravian theology. It had come to Wesley, not from the United Brethren, but from Law.

The Moravians were essentially Quietists. Their conception of religion was a purely passive state in which Christ performs all that is necessary for the believer. Good works and self-denial are alike rejected as stultifying the high mysticism of absolute surrender. Christian Perfection implied self-culture,

self-discipline. It implied the working out of one's own salvation. The Brethren would none of it. Spangenberg, the Moravian pastor with whom, it will be remembered, Wesley met and conversed on his first landing in America, displayed deep emotion. His hand trembled as he said, "You all deceive your own souls! There is no higher state than that I have described. You are in a very dangerous error. You know not your own hearts. You fancy your corruptions are taken away, whereas they are only covered. Inward corruption never can be taken away till our bodies are in the dust." Peter Böhler, practically the instrument of Wesley's conversion, expressed in homelier phrase the same conviction: "Sin will and must always remain in the soul. The old man will remain till death. The old nature is like an old tooth; you may break off one bit, and another, and another; but you can never get it all away. The stump will stay as long as you live, and sometimes will ache too."

As Wesley was no less firm in insisting on his favourite doctrine, separation seemed inevitable. In order to prevent such a result, Count Zinzendorf himself, the apostle of simplicity, came over to England and met Wesley in Gray's Inn Walks. From the outset Zinzendorf took the upper hand, and asked Wesley why he had changed his religion. "You have affirmed," he said, "in your epistle, that they who are true Christians are not miserable sinners, and this is most false; the best of men are most miserable sinners, even till death. They who teach otherwise are either absolute impostors, or they are under a diabolical delusion. You have opposed our brethren who taught better things; and when they offered peace, you denied it.

I loved you greatly when you wrote to me from Georgia; then I knew that you were simple at heart. You wrote again; I knew that you were simple at heart, but that your ideas were disturbed. You came to us, and then your ideas were more and more confused."

Zinzendorf's recollections were correct. Wesley's pedagogues had reported him a *homo perturbatus*. He had lacked simplicity. His head had gained an ascendency over his heart. If that were true then, how much more true was it now! The tendency to heresy had blossomed into this deadly nightshade of Christian Perfection. The Count was fierce, implacable. He would hold no parley, grant no quarter. He treated the new doctrine as a doctrine of devils. "I acknowledge no inherent perfection in this life. This is the error of errors. I persecute it through all the world with fire and sword. I trample upon it, I destroy it. Christ is our only Perfection. All Christian Perfection is faith in the blood of Christ. It is imputed, not inherent. We are perfect in Christ; we are never perfect in ourselves." That no doubt might remain on the subject, Zinzendorf permitted himself to use language which, perhaps, expressed rather his own impatience and desire to end the controversy than the faith and practice of the general body of his co-religionists. "We reject all self-denial; we trample on it. In faith we do whatever we desire, and nothing more. We laugh at all mortification; no purifying precedes perfect love."

It is certain that the two men did not understand each other. Zinzendorf was content with ideas, whereas Wesley, like a practical Englishman, was anxious to see the *fruits* of righteousness. He was

ambitious; he aimed at reform. He figured to himself perfection as the end, and love as the breeze to waft the Christian believer nearer and nearer to that glorious destination. Where love exists in any high degree, it is absurd to speak of self-denial. The *pang* is gone. Wesley was therefore right in saying that the dispute was mainly about words, but he promised that, with God's help, he would ponder the Count's admonitions. These pious and proper expressions appeared to prelude, if not unity, at least external friendliness and inward charity. But Zinzendorf and Wesley were both strong-willed, not to say stiff-necked. The two popes excommunicated each other. The Count disowned the Wesleys through the profane and public agency of the *Daily Post* and the *Daily Advertiser*. Wesley, in turn, recorded his opinions and feelings in his own private and confidential *Journal*.

In the autumn of 1749 Wesley received a sympathetic letter from an unexpected quarter. John Martin Bolzius, a Moravian pastor settled in Georgia, and the identical person whom he had conceived it his duty to drive from the Lord's Table, wrote to inform him that "the Lord had not permitted the Herrnhuters (falsely called the Moravians) nor other false teachers to creep in among them." Wesley did not set much store by this distinction, nor was he perhaps greatly comforted by the assurance that the Herrnhuters had not as yet gained a footing in the colony. That they were active and zealous in the mother-country is proved by the following letter addressed to the editor of the *Daily Post*:—

"Whosoever reckons that those persons in England who are usually called Moravians and those who are

called Methodists are the same, is mistaken. That they are not the same people is manifest enough out of the Declaration of Louis, late Bishop and Trustee of the Brethren's Church, dated at London, March 1743; which I here send you, as I find it printed in a collection of original papers of the Brethren, printed at Büdingen, called the 'Büdingen Sammlung,' vol. iii. p. 852."

Wesley comments on this notification: "The Methodists, so-called, heartily thank Brother Louis for his Declaration, as they count it no honour to be in any connection either with him or his Brethren. But why is he ashamed of his name? The Count's name is Ludwig, not Louis; no more than mine is Jean or Giovanni." There is an obvious pettiness, as well as pettishness, in this rejoinder, and throughout Wesley was sarcastic and satirical rather than justly (or unjustly) indignant. On the first occasion of the rift, he fell foul of the Count's aristocratic titles. "Was there ever such a Proteus under the sun as this Lord Fraydeck, Domine de Thurstain, etc. etc., for he has almost as many names as he has faces or shapes. Oh, when will he learn (with all his learning) simplicity and godly sincerity? When will he be an upright follower of the Lamb, so that no guile may be found in his mouth?"

For "the well-known little fool and poor sinner," as he subscribed himself, the allusion to simplicity and godly sincerity, if he read it, must have been the most unkindest cut of all, since it was on those virtues that he insisted, insisted, insisted. However, Zinzendorf was not the sole, nor perhaps the worst, offender. Wesley discovered that the Moravians were anti-

nomian, not only in creed, but in deed. "The particulars," he says in one place, "are too shocking to relate." Nevertheless, on the testimony of Mr. K—, a brother renegade, he enters in his *Journal* for December 22, 1751, a particular account of their vices, which, if Mr. K— was truthful, rivalled those of Tiberius on the isle of Capreae. The Moravians had become "cruel and deceitful men"—certainly, a notable change from the time when they stood for Wesley in lieu of the apostles. It is an unpleasant trait in the character of this great man that he could not part from old friends without discharging at them the venom of abuse. Law had been reproached with his temper, and now the Moravians are worse than immoral. Doubtless, there were faults on both sides, but somehow Wesley creates the impression of sacrificing too largely on the altar of revised infallibility. He did not recant beliefs; he added to or modified them. He *did* recant—and it was not to his credit—persons.

It was towards his fathers in God that Wesley chiefly exhibited asperity. To be sure, he wrote of George Bell and similar fry with contemptuous indifference, but for them he had professed neither affection nor reverence. When, however, it was a question of George Whitefield, a son in the gospel of whom he felt he could be proud, Wesley, it is just to state, was a monument of patience. About the year 1741 there arose serious differences between Whitefield and the Wesleys concerning predestination. Whitefield was a convinced Calvinist, as were many other leading Methodists—notably Cennick. On the other hand, "brother Charles pleased the world with

universal redemption, and brother John followed him in everything."

That was Cennick's story. Whatever Cennick might say, and he said besides that no atheist could preach more against predestinarianism than the Wesley brothers, John Wesley had always treated both men and doctrine with marked tenderness. He knew that there were Calvinists among his followers, but he took no steps to expel them, or, rather, he only expelled them when they abandoned themselves to slandering and backbiting. Then "I, John Wesley," did declare certain specified persons to be no longer members of the band society.

It might perhaps have been well had the disciplinary process began sooner. A woman had complained to Charles Wesley of her husband, who had embraced the predestinarian gospel, had returned home elect, and had celebrated the discovery by beating his wife. The ignorance, if not the brutality, of this Calvinist was equalled by that of two "prophets" who, about this time, called on John Wesley with a message from God. This was to the effect that very shortly he would be *born'd* again. One of them added that they would stay in the house till all was accomplished—unless they were turned out. As the weather was rough, Wesley had compassion on their infirmities.

The last charge that could be brought and sustained against Wesley was that of favouring needless expulsions. So far from wishing to rid himself of predestinarian malcontents, he sought to conciliate them by himself adopting Calvinism on its *positive* side.

There were three points in dispute—unconditional

election, irresistible grace, and final perseverance. As regards the first, Wesley held, though he did not think the matter capable of proof, that God "has unconditionally elected some persons, thence eminently styled 'the elect' to eternal glory," but he would not allow that everyone not so elected must perish eternally. Secondly, with reference to the highly favoured few, those specially elect (if any there were), the grace of God was of necessity irresistible. But it did not follow that Hell was to be the portion of all who were not the subjects of that particular kind of grace. The belief in final perseverance he found unobjectionable. There was a state in this life from which a man could not finally fall, and this state the man had attained who could say, "Old things are passed away; all things in me are become new." All those eminently styled "the elect" would infallibly persevere to the end.

These concessions did not satisfy Whitefield, who published a sermon in which he assailed, *inter alia*, Wesley's habit of casting lots. The allusion, as it was not germane to the discussion, must be taken as evidence of some heat; and Whitefield, recognising his fault, had the good sense to apologise. Wesley did not reply to the pamphlet. "You may read Whitefield against Wesley," he said, "but you shall never read Wesley against Whitefield." The strong antagonism of their views was, however, made manifest in a conversation that took place after a private assembly in which Whitefield had propounded his opinions with peculiar vigour and gusto.

"Brother," asked Wesley, "are you aware of what you have done to-night?"

"Yes," said Whitefield, "I have defended truth."

"You have tried to prove," answered Wesley, "that God is worse than the devil, for the devil can only *tempt* a man to sin. But, if what you have said be true, God *forces* a man to sin; and therefore, on your system, God is worse than the devil."

Co-operation in these circumstances was impossible, but, so far as feeling was concerned, it is pleasing to record that, through the good offices of Howell Harris, a warm-hearted Welsh preacher, the two great Methodists were fully reconciled. "Mr. Wesley," wrote Whitefield in 1742, "I think is wrong in some things; but I believe he will shine bright in glory. I have not given way to him, or to any whom I thought in error—no, not for an hour; but I think it best not to dispute where there is no probability of convincing." Again, in a communication addressed to Wesley on October 11 of that year, he observes, "I had your kind letter, dated October 5. In answer to the first part of it, I say, 'Let old things pass away, and all things become new.' I can also heartily say 'Amen' to the latter part of it—'Let the king live for ever and controversy die.' It has died with me long ago. I thank you, dear sir, for praying for me. I have been upon my knees praying for you and yours, and that nothing but love, lowliness, and simplicity may be among us!"

However, the leaders continued to work on independent lines. Whitefield, when in England, poured forth torrents of eloquence in his Tabernacles, and Wesley prosecuted his task of "spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land." But there was no more bitterness. When, in 1770, tidings were brought from

America of Whitefield's death, Wesley, at the request of his executors, preached his funeral sermon.

Although the relations between Whitefield and Wesley were thus happily adjusted, the controversy did not end, and Wesley had to encounter the pointed and poisoned shafts of many ireful Calvinists, including Augustus Toplady, writer of "Rock of Ages," and the celebrated Rowland Hill. In 1776 was published a twopenny pamphlet entitled, "A necessary Alarm and most earnest Caveto against Tabernacle Principles and Tabernacle Connections; containing the substance of an extraordinary Harangue and Exhortation, delivered at Penzance, in August 1774; on an extraordinary occasion. By J. W., Master of very extraordinary Arts." Toplady reviewed this pamphlet in his *Gospel Magazine*. He described it as "a delicate satire on Wesley," and hoped that "the cream of tartar, so ably administered by the anonymous physician, would prove a sweetener of the patient's crudities, and conduce to carry off some portion of his self-sufficiency."

In the following year Rowland Hill entered the lists. He issued an octavo pamphlet of forty pages, which he styled "Imposture Detected and the Dead Vindicated; in a Letter to a Friend: containing some gentle Strictures on the false and libellous Harangue, lately delivered by Mr. John Wesley, upon his laying the first stone of his new Dissenting Meeting-house, near the City Road."

According to this account, Wesley's sermon was a wretched harangue, from which the blessed name of Jesus was almost totally excluded. By erasing about half a dozen lines the shrewdest of readers might be defied to discover whether the lying apostle of the

Foundery was a Jew, a papist, a pagan, or a Turk. The late ever-memorable Mr. Whitefield was being scratched out of his grave by the claws of a designing wolf.

Wesley was a libeller, a dealer in stolen wares. He was as unprincipled as a rook, and as silly as a jackdaw, first pilfering his neighbour's plumage, and then going proudly forth, displaying his borrowed tail to the eyes of a laughing world.

Persons that were toad-eaters to Mr. John Wesley stood in need of very wide throats, and that which he wished them to swallow was enough to choke an elephant. He was for ever going about raising Dissenting congregations, and building Dissenters' meeting-houses the kingdom over. Yet you could not love the Church, unless you went to Wesley's meeting-house; nor be a friend to the established bishops, priests, and deacons, unless you admired Wesley's ragged legion of preaching barbers, cobblers, tinkers, scavengers, draymen, and chimney-sweepers.

With regard to Wesley's personal character, venom distilled from his graceless pen. Mr. Whitefield was blackened by the venomous quill of this grey-headed enemy to all righteousness. Wesley was a crafty slanderer, an unfeeling reviler, a liar of the most gigantic magnitude, a Solomon in a cassock, a wretch, a disappointed Orlando Furioso, a miscreant apostate, whose perfection consisted in his perfect hatred of all goodness and good men.

This was evidently designed as a final and terrific onslaught on the champion of Arminianism; and, in so far as a ramping and a roaring style could inspire terror or crush opposition, the effort was doubtless

successful. But ridicule, though always unpleasant, sometimes fails of its effect. It tends to fail, when it is palpably overdone.

As partly explaining the violence of these tirades, it should be recorded that Wesley's conference in 1776 had made certain official pronouncements on Calvinism. It had been adjudged the grand hindrance of the work of God, and preachers had been requested to pray constantly and earnestly that God would stop the plague. Tyerman asks "Was it wise to publish this?" *Voilà!*

Wesley's Calvinistic enemies found a most useful and unscrupulous ally in his wife. Possessing herself of some of his letters, she wilfully corrupted the text so as to make innocent spiritual allusions yield a sense the furthest from his thoughts. The letters thus metamorphosed were placed in the hands of his antagonists to make any use of them they pleased. Of course, the correspondence was printed in the public journals, and for a time the enemies of Methodism enjoyed a great triumph. Charles Wesley was agonised, and urged his brother to adopt measures for the vindication of his character. But the elder brother, wisely or unwisely, preferred to do nothing. He had become so used to every sort of libel that he had ceased to care what men said of him; and he was almost a complete stranger to depression. He once said that he had never in his life suffered from "lowness of spirits" for a quarter of an hour—a remarkable statement, when it is remembered that, for thirty years, he was burdened with a wife who was to him all that a wife should not be.

As the circumstances of Wesley's marriage threw into relief his characteristic virtues and defects, and

as the fact itself might have had important consequences for Methodism, it will be necessary to devote attention to acts of stupendous folly.

When Charles Wesley had attained the mature age of forty-one, he entered the bonds of matrimony with Miss Sarah Gwynne. The nuptial ceremony was performed by his brother John, who said of the occasion that it "was a solemn day such as became the dignity of a Christian marriage." The venture proved successful in every way except that it tempered the bridegroom's ardour for evangelical toil, and narrowed his horizon to the daily round and common task of parochial duty. It is probable, however, that, had he never enjoyed the sweets of domestic retirement, Charles's sober disposition and hatred of notoriety would have conduced to the same result.

From the time of this wedding John Wesley seems to have experienced a kind of unrest. He had been used to take a severely ascetic view of marriage. At twenty-seven, he tells us, he held it unlawful for a priest to marry; and, at a later period, he could not disassociate a suspicion of impurity from the marriage bed. Whether he was still affected by this prejudice when he was wooing Miss Sophy, or thought it better to take her, impurity and all, rather than go without her agreeable society, is an enigma, and a difficult one. Anyhow, at forty-six, he had vanquished this scruple, and to wed or not to wed had come to be a question, not of lawfulness, but of expediency. By expediency must not be understood worldly prudence. Wesley, disregarding scriptural advice, hardly ever sat down to count the cost. But he saw no reason why he should not do as other men, and it was reasonable to

conclude that he would make a much better husband, father, citizen, and friend than the vast majority of those who assumed marital responsibilities from worldly or carnal motives. Tyerman maintains that, if the woman he married had been worthy of him, he would have been one of the most loving husbands that ever lived. Perhaps so. No doubt he was, in his awkward way, affectionate. But sentiment, though too much disparaged by professional match-makers, is no adequate basis for marriage. To do him justice, Wesley never supposed that it was, but other considerations presented themselves when he was morally or actually committed to a choice recommended by sentiment alone.

It was safe to predict that Wesley, who was as anxious to obtain a worthy partner as ever Tyerman could have been for him, would confine his researches to the modest females of his own persuasion. His eye fell on a buxom young widow of twenty-six, who nursed him through a week of biliousness at Newcastle. He asked her to be his wife. Grace Murray was overwhelmed with joy. She thought it too great a blessing, and as she was reluctant to part from him, Wesley took her on a preaching tour through Yorkshire and Derbyshire. When their first raptures had subsided, he left her in charge of one of his preachers, John Bennet. Now it was so that a year before she nursed Wesley, Grace Murray had ministered to this same John Bennet, and they had corresponded ever since. After spending some time with him, she found that it was the Lord's will that she should marry him, but, on receipt of a letter, the pious coquette thought better of this resolve, and her inclinations again veered

towards Wesley. But not permanently. Jealousy of Molly Francis seized her, and then, once more, John Bennet had the cry. At length the two candidates met, and on being told that his letters to the lady had been regularly forwarded to his rival, Wesley resigned his claim. His inamorata, however, refused her consent to the arrangement. Determined to live and die with him, she insisted on immediate marriage. Thereupon Wesley rehearsed his old tricks. As he had served Sophy, so also did he serve Grace. He would not marry her at once, because he wished—(1) To satisfy John Bennet; (2) to procure his brother's consent; (3) to send an account of his reasons for marrying to all the preachers and societies, and to desire their prayers. For the accomplishment of these conditions he thought that less than a year might suffice, but, whether or no, the lady vowed that she would not wait longer.

In all this Wesley betrayed woeful ignorance of human nature. Grace had been flattered by his notice, and, like any other young woman, relished the idea of promotion. But, of course, she loved Bennet, and Bennet loved her. When Wesley spoke of satisfying Bennet, he spoke of the impossible. It was equally impossible to procure his brother's consent. Charles Wesley was not the man to tolerate as sister-in-law a person who had filled the humble position of domestic servant, and who was in no sense his equal. If Mrs. Charles Wesley did not oppose the match with frantic and unnatural energy, she must have been unlike most of her sex. As much, or nearly as much, might be predicated of the preachers and societies. They would dislike and disdain the queenship of a translated

nobody. If Sister Lyddell was offended because Grace Murray had the impudence to ride into Newcastle with Wesley, what would have been her feelings if bidden to salute her as his wife? Perhaps she would have done as requested, and prayed for *him*, but it requires an effort to imagine that she would have prayed for *her*.

Apprised of his brother's intentions, Charles lost no time in placing the consequences before him. The preachers would inevitably "strike." The societies would break up—in fact, were breaking up. John, however, was obdurate. Charles then turned to the would-be bride. He met her, kissed her, and cried, "Grace Murray, you have broken my heart." This was a singular greeting, but Charles was wily, and the lady understood him perfectly. He coaxed Grace to Newcastle, and to Bennet. The impulsive female threw herself at her lover's feet—she implored his forgiveness—and within a week they were wedded at St. Andrew's Church.

John vehemently resented this interference of Charles, and when next he contemplated matrimony, was careful not to stipulate for his brother's acquiescence. Faithful John and fickle Grace were married towards the end of September 1745. In July of the same year, Charles had been introduced at Edward Perronet's to a "woman of sorrowful spirit." She was a Mrs. Vazeille. In 1750 this lady accompanied him on a visit to his wife's relations; and, on her return, entertained Mr. and Mrs. Wesley for some eight or nine days at her home in London. On February 2, 1751, he records the outcome of these civilities. "My brother told me he was resolved to marry. I was

thunderstruck, and could only answer he had given me the first blow, and his marriage would come like a *coup de grâce*. Trusty Ned Perronet followed, and told me the person was Mrs. Vazeille!—one of whom I never had the least suspicion. I refused his company to the chapel, and retired to mourn with my faithful Sally. I groaned all the day, and several following ones, under my own and the people's burdens. I could eat no pleasant food, nor preach, nor rest, either by night or by day."

These expressions leave us in no doubt what Charles's reply would have been if John had been so indiscreet as to ask his consent. Experience had taught him more than one lesson, and he had probably come to think that Charles would never, under any circumstances, have given consent to his marriage. This time he contented himself with an approving conscience and the general sanction of the Rev. Vincent Perronet, already mentioned as a warm friend and sympathiser. "Having received a full answer from Mr. Perronet, I was clearly convinced that I ought to marry. For many years I remained single, because I believed I could be more useful in a single than in a married state. And I praise God, who enabled me so to do. I now as fully believed that, in my present circumstances, I might be more useful in a married state."

Although Wesley conceived that, personally, he might be of more use in a married state, he was far from thinking that all single men should follow his example. Four days after he had acquainted his brother with his resolution, he met the bachelors of the society in London, and pointed out for how many reasons "it was good for those who had received that

gift from God to remain single for the kingdom of heaven's sake, unless where a particular case might be an exception to the general rule." It would have been more satisfactory, perhaps, if Wesley had recanted entirely. It has been said that he did not recant his opinions, but added to, or modified, them, whereas he *did* recant persons. On this occasion he recanted himself.[1]

It seems likely that the precariousness of his present views, the memory of his former vacillations, and his recent taste of female inconstancy, caused Wesley to reflect that delays are dangerous. Who knew but Mrs. Vazeille might have two strings to her bow, or, as it might be expressed with equal propriety, two beaus to her string?

Wesley ran no unnecessary risks. After a brief courtship of sixteen days at the most, he led her, apparently nothing loth, to the altar. According to the fashion of the period, the *Gentleman's Magazine* thus announced the event: "February 18.—Rev. Mr. John Wesley, Methodist preacher, to a merchant's widow in Threadneedle Street, with a jointure of £300 per annum." There were four children, and the bride's fortune—£10,100 invested in three per cent. consols—was secured to her and them.

Wesley therefore was not quite the happy man that he appeared, even from a financier's standpoint. It is

[1] Rowland Hill, in his *Review* and *Farrago Double-distilled*, tackled Wesley on this seeming inconsistency. "Mr. W. says that his thoughts on a single life are just the same as they have been these thirty years. Why then did he marry?" Wesley's first answer was, "For reasons best known to himself." This he afterwards explained by adding, "As much as to say, I judge it extremely impertinent for any but a superior to ask me the question."

hard to say how far he was actuated in his choice by the circumstance of Mrs. Vazeille possessing private means. Wesley was in no sense avaricious, but he might have deemed it an advantage that, in marrying, he would impose no fresh burden on the societies. Without controversy, he imposed a fresh and very heavy burden on himself.

Mrs. Vazeille was no angel; she was indeed—in the language of St. Paul—a messenger of Satan, sent to buffet him. At first she went with him on his journeys and interested herself in the welfare of his societies. Whether, however, her presence was calculated to enhance her husband's influence is extremely doubtful. Prior to her first marriage, she appears to have been a not too respectable domestic servant, and was still very illiterate. On those or similar grounds both Charles and his beloved Sally treated her with coolness; and, as she was a woman of jealous and violent temper, and had reigned supreme over the late Mr. Vazeille, it is more than probable that she visited this coolness on John.

His prospects of happiness had now become very small, but Wesley was foolish enough to lessen them by a Platonic friendship with Sarah Ryan, a magdalen whom he had installed as his housekeeper at Bristol. He corresponded with this woman in unguarded terms. "You have refreshed my bowels in the Lord. I not only excuse, but welcome your simplicity; and whatever freedom you use, it will be welcome." He asked her about her dreams. "Is there no vanity or folly in your dreams?—no temptation that almost overcomes you? And are you then as sensible of the presence of God, and as full of prayer, as when you are waking?"

While her husband cannot be acquitted of indiscretion, Mrs. Wesley revelled and rioted in suspicions. She affirmed, and perhaps believed, that Charles's immaculate Sally had been for years his brother's mistress. John complained to Sarah Ryan that he was "continually watched over for evil," and that his fond words were requited by "a thousand little tart unkind reflections." Unhappily, his sorrows were not confined to espionage and abuse. Considering the kind of statements she bandied about in public, it will occasion no surprise that, in private, his wife bandied about John Wesley himself. Herculean John Hampson, in an address to his son, casts a powerful side-light on their domestic relations.

"Jack," he said, "I was once on the point of committing murder. Once, when I was in the north of Ireland, I went into a room and found Mrs. Wesley foaming with fury. Her husband was on the floor, where she had been trailing him by the hair of his head; and she herself was still holding in her hand venerable locks which she had plucked up by the roots. I felt as if I could have knocked the soul out of her."

About this time Wesley penned and sent to his wife what Tyerman designates a "manly, noble, loving letter," which ought, he thinks, to have produced a good effect. The epithets will serve, for Wesley's patience was indeed wonderful. As diplomacy, the effort was contemptible. In the first place, the letter was argumentative, and an angry woman pays no heed to argument. Secondly, it was historical. It raked up his wrongs in order to show what a good man he was, and how fortunate she might deem herself in

possessing him. It began by assuming that she was the subject of divine chastisement, and, to convince her thereof, criticised her offspring. God had given her a dutiful, but sickly daughter. He had taken away one of her sons. Another had been a "grievous cross," and the third would probably turn out as bad. It was not chary of good advice. "Do not any longer contend for mastery, for power, money, or praise. Be content to be a private, insignificant person, known and loved by God and me." In conclusion, it tells her that, if she would allow him to be governed by God and his own conscience, he, for his part, would govern her with gentle sway. Wesley had yet to prove that he could govern her at all. To speak of *governing* such a wife was at once impolitic and laughable, unless he was prepared to enact the taming of a shrew.

On, or of, January 23, 1771, Wesley wrote in his *Journal*, "For what cause I know not, my wife set out for Newcastle, purposing never to return. *Non eam reliqui; non dimisi; non revocabo.*" These stately expressions have somewhat the effect of Cæsar's *veni, vidi, vici*, though it is obvious that Wesley's methods were not those of Cæsar. Mrs. Wesley had gone on a long visit to her "dutiful, but sickly" daughter, who had married a Mr. Smith. Fourteen months later, the elderly pair again came together. The matter is too grave for a jest, but, really, there is something in this flight of groundless jealousy and Wesley's *non dimisi; non revocabo* that irresistibly suggests Mr. Baring-Gould's witty little tale, "A Runaway Wife." Comparison of the cases teaches that ordinary, unambitious people, well-matched, have a far better hope of composing their differences than

such couples as Wesley and his wife, each endued with a taste and a talent for ruling. Mrs. Wesley was desirous of managing her husband, of making him exclusively her own. When his soaring spirit rose superior to her toils, all that was evil in her nature asserted itself.

In 1778 he wrote to her from Bristol: "If you were to live a thousand years, you could not undo the mischief you have done; and until you have done all you can towards it, I bid you farewell." On October 8, 1781, Wesley's evil genius set out for some other sphere than Newcastle.

The entries in Wesley's *Journal* were, it is plain, not always made on the dates to which they refer. Thus, under "October 12," he remarks, "I came to London, and was informed that my wife died on Monday. This evening she was buried, though I was not informed of it till a day or two after." Wesley adds no comment, and the inscription on her tomb reveals a striking omission. "A woman of exemplary piety, a tender parent, and a sincere friend"—thus runs the epitaph. But Southey says of her that "she deserves to be classed with Xanthippe, and the wife of Job, as one of the three bad wives." Of her fortune, now reduced by one half, he received not one penny, but she left him a ring. St. Paul tells us that marriage is a great mystery. It is always that, but to Wesley it must have appeared a mystery of iniquity.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW DISSENT

Out of Place — Charity — Principles of Methodism and the Reformation Contrasted — Wesley no Sectary — Early Aspirations—Character and Constituents of Methodism—Origin of the Class-Meeting—Precedents—Lay-Preachers—Education—Hymnology—Methodism in America—Ordinations—Episcopal Resentment—Wesley in Old Age—Death and Burial—A Man.

THE incidents of Wesley's courtships and marriage tend to obscure his extraordinary abilities, and it must be conceded that they disclose an element of weakness. He had the gift of continence, but he had not the gift of discernment of spirits, nor the gift of judgment, nor the gift of tact. The moment he approached the delicate questions involved in the distinction of sex, his mental apparatus seemed to fail. He was either too slow or too fast. He was less absorbed than absorbing. He demanded homage, obedience.

Though the results were less miserably obvious, the same incapacity displayed itself in every relation of life which Wesley was not permitted to dominate. He could bear with a superior of his own appointing, one whom he could dismiss at pleasure. He bore with Zinzendorf, for instance. He could bear even with

bishops and archbishops, if they kept their place and did not obstruct his personal schemes. A copartner, however, insisting on perfect equality, he could not, and would not, bear; and he bowed to no authority save God and his own conscience.

Now Wesley was a priest of the Church of England. He acknowledged her as a branch of the Church Catholic. He served, and loved, and honoured her. But successive Prime Ministers neglected to make him Archbishop of Canterbury, and thus Wesley was prevented from accomplishing his task without schism. Not that he was ambitious—at least, in any vulgar sense—of that great office, but, seated in the chair of St. Augustine, he might have converted the Church into a hotbed of Methodism. The only possible alternative was to recognise him as a Black Pope. The constitution of the English Church knew nothing of Black Popes, and so in the end there was no stopping the projection into space of new Dissenting bodies—not hostile, like the old, but still separate and distinct from the parent luminary.

This result Wesley neither desired nor anticipated. His brother Samuel, with a keener foresight than his own, detected at the outset the tendency of the movement, and said in his haste, "they design separation." *There* Samuel was wrong. Separation would happen; separation was latent in the conditions; but separation was nobody's design. Six years later, in his *Earnest Appeal*, John Wesley ridiculed the notion as too preposterous for mention. "'But why, then,' say some, 'do you leave the Church?' *Leave the Church!* What do you mean? Do we leave so much as the church walls? Your own eyes tell you we do not. . . . .

You have retailed a sentence from somebody else, which you no more understand than he. And no marvel; for it is a true observation,

'Nonsense is never to be understood.'"

The Methodist societies, however, were not pure Church institutions. Had that been the case, had they existed to entrap Dissenters, it is possible that Wesley might have been applauded for his Jesuitical aim. But he never attempted proselytism. Dissenters were free to join the societies; and, having joined them, were free to participate in the services of their chosen sect. The core of union was what was, or was believed to be, the essence of Christianity. As regards non-essentials, the utmost latitude was allowed. The large charity was epitomised in Wesley's watchword, "The friends of all, the enemies of none." But the Methodists could not avoid giving offence. Their motives were misconstrued. Their fraternal sentiments were attributed, not to any kindliness of heart, but to a certain quality of head, to the unjust possession of brains. This might have been accepted as a compliment, but the critics did their best, by judicious admixture of blame, not to spoil them by flattery.

A *Review* of their policy, doctrines, and morals—a work already alluded to in these pages—thus contrasts Methodist principles with the principles of the Great Reformation. "The first thing which strikes an observer is the accommodating nature of their principles and conduct. They become all things to all men. The Methodists are a singular phenomenon in the religious world. They stand up as a particular sect, but at the same time receive into their bosom

people of very different persuasions, all retaining their original professions. Their principles are neither liberal nor tolerant, and yet people of the most opposite sentiments unite in this society. When the Reformers broke off from the Church of Rome, and when other sectaries revolted from established churches, their first step was always to possess their followers with the most irreconcilable aversion to the mother churches, and, in a stubborn and headstrong humour, to tear asunder all the ties that formed the original connection. The consequence was the spirit of party broke forth; mutual antipathy took place; each side became armed with hatred and jealousy; and every avenue was carefully guarded on either side against all future intercourse or connection.

"Quite different and much more perfect has been the policy of the Methodists. It has been dictated by a sound head and a cool heart. Hurried on by no violence of zeal, they have stolen in upon the prejudices, and, without alarming, have insinuated themselves into the hearts of mankind. They are taught never to desert (at least, nominally) their original profession. They frequent the ordinances of their respective original societies; they adhere to all their forms. Hence living upon good terms with their former brethren, they have a free intercourse and communion with all their members. They have an opportunity of insinuating themselves into their favour and good graces; and by superior pretensions to religion they have a claim also upon their respect.

"Here then are great advantages in making proselytes. The Reformers and the sectaries, however sincere and honest, certainly acted with too much zeal

and bitterness to gain followers; but the Methodists conduct themselves with all the good management of the most able politicians. The hearts of the former were too much interested to employ address, whilst the latter sap the foundation of their antagonists without the declaration of hostilities. By a professed adherence to original principles, they make the attack without creating the suspicion of their design; and hence the new converts become insensibly transformed without feeling the shock that an immediate rupture would produce. Into this body are collected people of all persuasions; and all their several differences are covered over with the broad cloak of Methodism."

These statements deserve consideration, as the writer, with all his ill-will, makes it plain that Wesley was no intentional schismatic, that he aimed at uniting, not at dividing, Christians. The Methodists, however, are credited with more than Machiavelian astuteness. Their liberality, it is said, was a ruse. Now, it is a fact that Wesley had great talents for organisation, and he was assuredly not less acute than his reviewer. Quite possibly, therefore, on looking back, he may have seen that pacific comprehension had aided in extending Methodism. But the thought did not enter into his schemes. Indeed, he expressly disclaimed, both for his brother and himself, the ambition of heading a sect. They were drawn, he maintained, into that position, for which they had no natural inclination, by the irresistible current of events.

"Yet I cannot but remind considerate men in how remarkable a manner the wisdom of God has for many years guarded against this pretence, with respect to my brother and me in particular. Scarce any two

men in Great Britain, of our rank, have been so held out as it were to all the world; especially of those who from their childhood had always loved and studiously sought retirement. And I had procured what I sought. I was quite safe, as I supposed, in a little country town, when I was required to take charge of some young gentlemen by Dr. Morley, the only man then in England to whom I could deny nothing. From that time both my brother and I (utterly against our will) came to be more and more observed and known, till we were more spoken of than perhaps two so inconsiderable persons ever were before in the nation. To make us more public still, as honest madmen at least, by a strange concurrence of providences, overturning all our preceding resolutions, we were hurried away to America. However, at our return from thence, we were resolved to retire out of the world at once, being sated with noise, hurry, and fatigue, and seeking nothing but to be at rest. Indeed, for a long season, the greatest pleasure I had desired on this side eternity was—

'Tacitum sylvas inter reptare salubres,
Quærentem quidquid dignum sapiente bonoque.'[1]

And we had attained our desire. We wanted nothing. We looked for nothing more in this world, when we were dragged out again by earnest importunity to preach at one place, and another, and another, and so carried on, we knew not how, without any design but the general one of saving souls, into a situation which, had it been named to us at first, would have appeared far worse than death" (*Farther Appeal*).

[1] "To glide in silence 'mid the healthful woods,
Seeking whate'er becomes the good and wise."

These utterances suggest that Wesley would have chosen a life like Wordsworth's, and the entire indifference they express to the common sources of happiness —the very language—necessarily reminds us of the sonnets on "Personal Talk," notably the lines:

> "Better than such discourse doth silence long,
> Long barren silence square with my desire;
> To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
> In the loud presence of my cottage-fire,
> And listen to the flapping of the flame,
> Or kettle whispering its faint undersong."

And, again:

> "Wings have we—and as far as we can go,
> We may find pleasure: wilderness and wood,
> Blank ocean and mere sky support that mood
> Which with the lofty sanctifies the low.
> Dreams, books are each a world; and books we know
> Are a substantial world, both pure and good."

But Wordsworth was not only a recluse—he was also a traveller; and with this propensity also Wesley would have sympathised. During his father's life he journeyed between Oxford and Epworth on foot, partly for the sake of the exercise, and partly that he might have more to bestow in charity. As he preached on the Sundays he may be said, even then, to have already begun his missionary career. Of his later travels in America and Germany it is needless to speak further. The habits thus formed may have rendered it hard for him to settle down to a stationary existence. At any rate, the care of the societies which he proceeded to plant all over the United Kingdom left him no option but to go to and fro in the earth. His life thenceforth was one continual migration.

If the parochial clergy had shown themselves willing to co-operate, this vast work of pastoral visitation would have been obviated. But, with few exceptions, bishops, priests, and deacons persisted in regarding the movement as a new and insidious form of Dissent. This, as we have seen, was not Wesley's aim; nor was it for many, many years, anything of a fact. He drew the bulk of his converts from the teeming multitudes who acknowledged neither Church nor Dissent; and, except in the case of Dissenters, he always encouraged attendance at Church services, particularly at Holy Communion. In spite of the anonymous critic, the Dissenting element was probably at no time very large. At all events, in 1763 Wesley could say that most of his adherents were "Church of England men." The result of his labours ought therefore to have been an enormous accession of strength, both moral and numerical, to the Church of which he was a minister. But almost everywhere the use of her pulpits was forbidden him; and Wesley, when not actively opposed, was freely ostracised by the established clergy. Under these circumstances, Methodism entered on a series of adaptations.

It may perhaps be remarked that Wesley was hardly in a position to assail the clergy for their lack of sympathy. In the first place, the Methodists had identified themselves with the Moravians; and Wesley, as a High Church clergyman in Georgia, had shown what he thought of the ecclesiastical status of the German sectaries by driving from the Lord's Table the good and worthy Martin Bolzius. In the second place, the Methodist Society had been formed by schism from the Moravian fraternity. Wesley was not only a

doctrinal weathercock, but did not hesitate, when his principles and theirs no longer agreed, to turn his back on old friends. He could not complain, then, if his brethren the clergy followed the same course with him.

The phrase "Methodist Society" is technically a misnomer. Originally, Methodism consisted of a number of "societies," which, however, were soon knit into a "connexion." Of late years the "connexion" has been dignified by the name of the "Wesleyan Methodist Church," but Wesley's description of his disciples, in their collective capacity, was "the people *called* Methodists." By adopting this style, he tacitly protested against the term "Methodist," which had been forced upon him from without. At the same time he showed, by the colourless and almost colloquial word "people," that he considered the Methodist connexion as neither Church nor Sect. Wider, more universal than the Church of England, inasmuch as it included Dissenters, it was still not an adverse, but a friendly organisation.

The earliest Methodist society was established, in 1740, at the chapel in Moorfields. This example was followed in the other great centre of the Methodist propaganda, Bristol; and it was at Bristol that the next important change was carried into operation. It seems that some discussion arose regarding the pecuniary support of the cause, and it was resolved for the sake of convenience to divide the society into classes. Persons were appointed to visit the members of these classes and collect what was a sort of Peter's pence. For Wesley's tax was not exorbitant. A penny a week, and a shilling a quarter—that was all. A share of the contributions was expended on sick

members, so that the Methodist class might be considered as partaking of the nature of a benefit club.

The question of finance thus settled, Wesley—whose errand was, of course, to save souls—conceived the idea of spiritualising these units. It would be a good thing, he thought, if the members would meet periodically, for mutual counsel and consolation, under the presidency of some devout and intelligent leader. The idea was soon translated into practice; and the "class-meeting" was, and remains, the most characteristic product of Methodism. Externally, indeed, Methodism owes much of its permanence and stability to the class-meeting. Whitefield did not set much store by this institution. He considered that preaching was his business, and left the pastoral side of Methodism, its systematic development, to others. The consequence is that, even in America, though Whitefield spent many more years in that hemisphere, American Methodism bears the impress of Wesley.

It was nevertheless with no far-reaching intentions that Wesley established either societies or classes. He thought, not of the generations to come, but of the generation in being. He studied how he might best conserve the fruits of his ministry, how he might restrain his converts from lapsing into indifference, infidelity, or vice. It is noticeable that, although he lived to hear Whitefield spoken of as a better churchman than himself, Wesley rather piqued himself on the circumstance that, in thus garnering souls, he was reviving a practice of the primitive Church. "Upon reflection," he says, "I could not but observe that this is the very thing which was from the beginning of Christianity. In the earliest times, those whom God

had sent forth 'preached the gospel to every creature.' The body of hearers were mostly either Jews or heathens. But as soon as any of these were so convinced of the truth as to forsake sin and seek the gospel of salvation, they immediately joined them together, took an account of their names, advised them to watch over each other, and met these κατηχούμενοι, *catechumens*, as they were then called, apart from the great congregation, that they might instruct, rebuke, exhort, and pray with them, and for them, according to their several necessities."

To those who seemed likely not to dishonour the society by levity and misconduct, Wesley gave a certificate—a ticket. The ticket held good only for three months. At the expiration of that term it was Wesley's intention to talk with each member and ascertain for himself whether he, or she, were worthy of a renewal of confidence. With his love of precedent and hatred of novelty, Wesley is careful to note that these tickets were of the same force as the ἐπιστολαὶ συστατικαί, "commendatory letters" mentioned by the apostle. They were the current coin of Methodist fellowship.

Temptations were around, and often they were temptations that could not be made known in a mixed assembly. To provide for these cases Wesley subdivided the classes into yet smaller groups—married or single men; married or single women. These little companies were called bands—"an old English word," says Wesley—and the leader was required, after making full confession himself, to put to each member many searching questions regarding his state, and sins, and temptations.

On one evening in every quarter all the men "in band," on another all the women, and on a third men and women together met to "eat bread" after the fashion of the ancient Christians, in grateful acknowledgment of God's mercies. "At these love-feasts (so we term them, retaining the name as well as the thing which was in use from the beginning) our food is only a little plain cake and water. But we seldom return from them without being fed not only with the 'meat which perisheth,' but with 'that which endureth to everlasting life.'"

It is clear that so complex and delicate an organisation demanded, in order that it might be permanent, something more than quarterly inspection. Wesley found on experience that societies, left to themselves, were in constant peril of dissolution. "What," he asks, "was to be done in a case of so extreme necessity, where so many souls lay at stake? No clergyman would assist at all. The expedient that remained was to find some one among themselves, who was upright of heart, and of sound judgment in the things of God, and to desire him to meet the rest as often as he could, in order to confirm them, as he was able, in the ways of God, either by reading to them, or by prayer, or by exhortation." Accordingly, he appointed John Cennick to the charge of the society in Kingswood, while Thomas Maxfield superintended the interests of Methodism in London.

It is to be remarked that the functions of these laymen were confined to the pastoral oversight of each flock. They were not supposed—indeed, they were supposed not—to preach. Only men who had been regularly ordained by episcopal hands were reputed fit

to be ambassadors, and to preach the gospel of Christ. Maxfield, however, installed in the seat of authority, took heart of grace, and began, not only to expound, but, *sans façon*, to preach. There was never much difference in principle, and in practice Maxfield's self-election was justified by the results. He was able and talented, and success crowned his efforts. But the step was irregular—it was a breach of discipline; and Wesley hastened to London to hold an inquisition on the subject. He was more than half-disposed to rebuke and restrain the innovator.

Old Mrs. Wesley was still living and residing near the Foundery. When her son called to see her, she noticed a cloud of displeasure on his brow, and inquired the reason. "Thomas Maxfield," he replied abruptly, "has turned preacher, I find." Mrs. Wesley regarded him attentively, and said, "John, you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of favouring readily anything of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself." Wesley followed this candid and dispassionate advice. The result was satisfactory; and the precisian, swallowing his prejudice, exclaimed, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good."

This incident would suggest that to Wesley lay-preaching was a new and unpleasant phenomenon, but it is a fact that, as early as 1738, Joseph Humphrys had acted in this capacity with Wesley's sanction. Probably, therefore, Wesley may have objected to the union of the preacher and the pastor

in a layman, as tantamount to the assumption of the full ministerial office. Nearly all in Wesley's first set of lay-helpers—Humphrys, Maxfield, Cennick, etc.—ended by turning their backs upon him. Writing in 1790, he tells us what became of Humphrys. "Thursday, 9 [September] I read over the experience of Joseph Humphrys, the first lay-preacher that assisted me in England, in the year 1738. From his own mouth I learn that he was perfected in love, and so continued for at least a twelvemonth. Afterwards he turned Calvinist, and joined Mr. Whitefield, and published an invective against my brother and me in the newspaper. In a while he renounced Mr. Whitefield, and was ordained a Presbyterian. At last he received episcopal ordination. He then scoffed at inward religion; and when reminded of his own experience, replied, 'That was one of the foolish things that I wrote in the time of my madness!'"

This disposition to "rat," though a spice of conscience may have gone with it, is not, it must be confessed, an agreeable feature in the history of early Methodism. Nevertheless, Wesley's choice of Cennick and Maxfield as lay-assistants was, as Southey has observed, by no means injudicious. The same remark will apply to other instances. Amongst the lay-preachers of Methodism—for, naturally, the appointment of three did not complete the revolution—were men of original genius, of whom Wesley could speak with admiration. "I knew a man who was so thoroughly acquainted with the Bible that if he was questioned concerning any Hebrew word in the Old, or Greek word in the New, Testament, he would tell, after a little pause, not only how often the one or the other occurred in the Bible,

but also what it meant in every place. His name was Thomas Walsh. Such a master of biblical knowledge I never saw before, and never expect to see again." More wonderful still were the intellectual powers of another of the preachers—John Downes; and Wesley goes into raptures over him. "I suppose he was as great a genius as Sir Isaac Newton; such strength of genius has scarce been known in Europe before. I will mention but two or three instances of it. When he was at school learning algebra, he came one day to his master, and said, 'Sir, I can prove this proposition a better way than it is proved in the book.' His master thought it could not be; but, upon trial, acknowledged it to be so. Some time after, his father sent him to Newcastle with a clock which was to be mended. He observed the clock-maker's tools, and the manner how he took it to pieces and put it together again; and when he came home, first made himself tools, and then made a clock, which went as true as any in the town. Another proof of it was this. Thirty years ago, while I was shaving, he was whittling the top of a stick. I asked, 'What are you doing?' He answered, 'I am taking your face, which I intend to engrave on a copper-plate.' Accordingly, without any instruction, he first made himself, and then engraved the plate. The second picture which he engraved was that which was prefixed to the *Notes upon the New Testament.* Such another instance, I suppose, not all England, or perhaps Europe, can produce."

There appear to have been dullards, too. When Wesley was approaching eighty, he fathered a novel—Brooke's *Fool of Quality*—and published it under the title of *Henry, Earl of Moreland.* Those were dif-

ferent days from the present, when novel-writing is a favourite pastime of young preachers. The early Methodist thought novel-reading next akin to dancing, and believed that people might read, as well as dance, themselves into the infernal pit. But *Henry, Earl of Moreland*, was an exception. It was said by Brooke's nephew to be founded on fact; and Wesley commended the work, or rather his abridgment, as a "treatise" on the sublime. John Easton, preacher, could not admit the distinction. He denounced his leader; and that led to the following duologue relating to passages in the book:—

Wesley: "Did you read *Vindex*, John?"

Easton: "Yes, sir."

W.: "Did you *laugh*, John?"

E.: "No, sir."

W.: "Did you read *Damon and Pythias*, John?"

E.: "Yes, sir."

W.: "Did you *cry*, John?"

E.: "No, sir."

W. (raising his eyes, and clasping his hands): "O earth, earth, earth!"

On June 25, 1744, and the five following days, was held at the Foundery, in London, the first of a long series of Conferences. It was attended by John and Charles Wesley and by four other clergymen—John Hodges, Henry Piers, Samuel Taylor, and John Meriton. There were present also four lay-preachers. Three of them — Thomas Maxfield, John Bennet, and John Downes—have already been introduced to the reader. The fourth was Thomas Richards. The proceedings included a solemn affirmation of loyalty to the Church of England, and of submission to her rulers. The Con-

ference, among other matters, took into consideration the status, duties, and limitations of the lay-assistants. One resolution was not flattering to the order, since it declared that they were allowable only in cases of necessity. As the laymen consented to be known as necessary evils, they must be judged to have possessed, at least, the grace of humility. But Wesley evidently regarded his laymen as *in statu pupillari*. He feared that they might make him ridiculous by their indiscretions. Accordingly, he broached for their guidance a code of rules of exemplary strictness. They were to be serious, and converse sparingly and cautiously with women. They were to take no steps towards marriage without first acquainting Wesley or his brother clergymen. They were to do nothing as gentlemen. They had no more to do with this character than with that of a dancing-master. They were not to be ashamed of fetching wood and drawing water; nor of cleaning their own shoes or those of their neighbour. They were to take no money of anyone, and were to contract no debts without Wesley's knowledge. They were not to mend the rules, but to observe them. They were to employ their time as Wesley directed; and for his satisfaction, as well as for their own profit, they were to keep journals.

Wesley's pupils at Lincoln, as well as the members of the Holy Club, had already tasted his love of discipline. The stringency of these regulations, therefore, no doubt reflected the character of the man. A further explanation lay in the novelty of the institution. The Methodist preacher, itinerant or local, is still, in different ways, practically unique. In the mid-eighteenth century he was a stupendous experiment. The Church

of England recruited its ranks from the universities and other foundations of sound and religious learning. Presbyterian ministers, though not of the same social standing, were not inferior in education. Even Dissent had its academies. But Wesley's preachers, like Wiclif's "poor priests," were for the most part ignorant men of humble position. As Rowland Hill saw fit to ridicule Wesley's "ragged legion of preaching barbers, cobblers, tinkers, scavengers, draymen, and chimney-sweepers,"[1] it was asking too much of unregenerate human nature to claim that it should refrain from "chaffing" the new race of preachers. And of succulent satire there was no stint.

"The bricklayer lays his trowel by,
And now builds mansions in the sky;
The cobbler, touched with holy pride,
Flings his old shoes and lasts aside,
And now devoutly sets about
Cobbling of souls that ne'er wear out.
The baker, now a preacher grown,
Finds man lives not by bread alone,
And now his customer he feeds
With prayers, with sermons, groans, and creeds.

[1] It would be a mistake to see in disciplined Methodism a religious parallel to the anarchy of the Puritan epoch, but the professional pride of Rowland Hill may certainly be justified by the example of Dr. South. In one of his sermons he says: "For truth scorns to be seen by eyes too much fixed upon inferior objects. It lies too deep to be pitched up with the plough, and too close to be beaten out with the hammer. It dwells not in shops or workhouses; nor, till the last age, was it ever known that any served seven years to a smith or tailor, that he might, at the end thereof, proceed Master of Arts, but such as those trades taught him; and much less, that he should commence Doctor or Divine from the shopboard or the anvil, or, from whistling to a team, come to preaching to a congregation. These were the peculiar, extraordinary privileges of the late blessed times of light and inspiration."

Weavers, inspired, their shuttles leave,
Sermons and flimsy hymns to weave.
Barbers unreaped will leave the chin,
To trim and shave the man within.
The gardener, weary of his trade,
Tired of the mattock and the spade,
Changed to Apollo in a trice,
Waters the plants of paradise.
The fishermen no longer set
For fish the meshes of their net;
But catch, like Peter, men of sin,
For catching is to take them in."

Having once adopted the principle of lay-preaching, and stipulated that his preachers should not aspire to the character of gentlemen,[1] Wesley concerned himself far less about their secular callings than about their moral and spiritual fitness. That some of his preachers were persons of more than respectable ability has been already shown. Their sincerity might almost be assumed. They had few or no worldly incentives, and the persecution was terrible. In the majority of cases the double test was, it can hardly be questioned, efficacious. There was, however, one remarkable exception. At Norwich James Wheatley waged an unequal

[1] Although Wesley disclaimed for his lay-helpers, and wished them to disclaim for themselves, the character of a gentleman—*i.e.* a man of position—it seems, on the impartial testimony of the *Spectator*, that his influence has tended to imbue his preachers with the more pleasing traits of the class in question. That journal, on July 15, 1899, contained the following remarks: "Wesley was always a scholar and a gentleman; and the results of those characteristics may be traced to this day—even in his humblest followers. One of the most perfect examples of a true gentleman that the present writer has ever known was a miner, who was a Methodist local preacher. In him, as in so many of his colleagues scattered up and down England, a certain gentle grace and spiritual refinement seemed part of his 'profession.'"

fight with the Hell-fire Club. He was stripped, and dragged to one of the bridges to be drowned, and perhaps would have been drowned but for the appearance of the mayor. At another time the blasphemous Jacobites formed a plan for suffocating him in a mud pit ten or twelve feet deep. Nevertheless, it was proved to Wesley's satisfaction, and to the satisfaction of the ecclesiastical court at Norwich, that James Wheatley, arrant hypocrite, was unconscionably immoral. The judge decreed that "the said Wheatley be enjoined a public penance, to be performed in a linen cloth, with a paper pinned to his breast, denoting his crime"; and Wesley, who had before suspected him, expelled him from his fellowship.

It was said of Wesley's preachers, after Methodism had been fifty years in existence, that they lived like stalled oxen. This was probably, even then, a wilful exaggeration, as the nature of their employment precluded habits of luxury. Anyhow, such an assertion could not have been made of the early preachers, whose lives were simple, hardy, and full of toil and adventure. The Methodist pioneers were of three sorts, rudely corresponding to Volunteers, Militia, and Regular Army. Some continued to follow their trade or profession, preaching in their town or village and occasionally farther afield. Others went about preaching for a longer or shorter time, and then resumed their places in ordinary civil occupations. A third class embraced preaching as a vocation. These underwent a period of probation; submitted to an examination of character and ability; and, finally, at the annual conference were admitted, with solemn prayer, into "full connexion." The triple division, never

exactly authorised, was not to last. In the eventual organisation Wesley's assistants were known either as "travelling" or "local" preachers.

The "travelling" preachers were about equal to Dissenting ministers—their financial prospects, gloomy and uncertain. They received no stipend, and, going forth without purse or scrip, in the ardour of faith, took no thought what they should eat, or what they should drink, or wherewithal they should be clothed. Journeying in this spirit, the preachers fared not utterly amiss. The societies, if they were not very rich, were liberal, and knew how to appreciate the self-denial of prophets and evangelists. It was otherwise with their wives and children who, in the absence of the breadwinner, ran a risk of destitution; and, to shield their families from want, not a few Methodist preachers ceased itinerating to become pastors of Independent churches. This failure of the commissariat offers a striking contrast to the arrangements afterwards introduced. In no other community or profession is marriage so easy or so safe as among Methodist ministers; and the cares inseparable from a growing family are sensibly lightened by an automatic increase of salary.

In proportion to density of membership, the sphere of labour tended to contract. There is in this respect a curious analogy between the early days of Methodism and the early days of the Government inspection of schools. The late Mr. Matthew Arnold accepted the office of inspector, in order to marry; but his wedded life was at first by no means of the normal description. The area assigned to him was so large that the devoted pair shifted from place to place in uncomfortable gipsy

fashion. Some notion of the hardships and difficulties that beset the early "travelling" preacher may be gleaned from a despatch written by one of the vanguard to the commander-in-chief. "Many doors are opened for preaching in these parts, but cannot be supplied for want of preachers. I think someone should be sent to assist me, otherwise we shall lose ground. My circuit requires me to travel one hundred and fifty miles in two weeks, during which time I preach publicly thirty-four times, besides meeting the societies, visiting the sick, and transacting other affairs."

From this statement it will be remarked that a number of societies were under the control of a single "travelling" preacher. He was the "superintendent" of the "circuit," so long as Wesley chose that he should move within the specified limits. A period of three years was afterwards settled on as the term beyond which no itinerant could retain the same appointment; but the Bible Christians, a minor Methodist body, are less rigorous than the parent community, which, however, has latterly manifested a disposition to relax the severity of the triennial change of circuits.

It is greatly to Wesley's credit that he always courageously faced the often heavy responsibilities involved in his new arrangements. When he sent his preachers hither and thither opening fresh centres of evangelistic enterprise, he did not forget that they had wives, on whom now devolved, if not the maintenance, at any rate the training and education of their children. This was not quite equitable, if it could be prevented; and Wesley resolved that it should be prevented—that Methodism should not be built up at the cost of

virtual widows and neglected offspring. In 1740 he had opened a school at Kingswood for the children of colliers. Eight years later he founded in the same place a new school for the children of his travelling preachers and other Methodists, who shared his objections to existing boarding-schools.

The institution was a strange medley of wisdom and folly. One feature with which Wesley found fault in the boarding-schools of the period was their situation in the midst of towns. This was a sound criticism, nor, in some respects, was Kingswood a bad choice for a public school. It was "private, remote from all high roads, on a small hill sloping to the west, sheltered from the east and north, and affording room for large gardens." But the situation had one defect, which ought to have been fatal. There was no sufficient supply of pure water. Wesley, however, was determined to plant his school there, and turned a deaf ear to the remonstrances of more practical friends. Vincent Perronet wrote to Walter Sellon: "My dear brother John Wesley wonders at the bad taste of those who seem not to be in raptures with Kingswood school. If there were no other objections but the want of good water upon the spot, this would be insuperable to all wise men, except himself and his brother Charles."

Wesley, it seems, had read Milton's treatise on Education, and, partly in consequence, had become an educational theorist of a whimsical and fantastic kind. Unhappily, he had the means of applying his theories, and a "corpus vile" on which to make an "experimentum crucis" in the persons of the preachers' boys. It is fair to remember, however, that Wesley warned *tender parents*—who, he rather needlessly adds, offered

their sons and daughters to devils—against sending their children to a school which, in the rigour of its discipline, was to be more than monastic. The pupils were to rise at four, and spend one hour in private reading, singing, meditation, and prayer. From the age of six to twelve they were to be exercised in reading, writing, arithmetic, English, French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, history, geography, chronology, rhetoric, logic, geometry, algebra, physics, and music. There were to be no hours for recreation, and no holidays; and a master was to be always in attendance. Wesley's explanation of this harshness was that those who played when they were boys would play when they were men.

The bare announcement of such a programme would, in these days, be enough to ensure the failure of the undertaking. In the eighteenth century, when the rights of boys were less understood and respected, it appears to have had the opposite effect. We hear of scholars from Denmark, scholars from Scandinavia, scholars from the West Indies, and even of *parlour boarders*. Still, after thirty-five years, the school could not be declared a success. It had realised none of Wesley's, certainly extravagant, expectations.

"My design," he says, "in building the house at Kingswood was to have therein a Christian family, every member whereof (children excepted) should be alive to God, and a pattern of all holiness. Here it was that I proposed to educate a few children, according to the accuracy of the Christian model. And almost as soon as we began, God gave us a token for good, four of the children receiving a clear sense of pardon. But, at present, the school does not, in any wise, answer the design of its institution, either with

regard to religion or learning. The children are not religious; they have not the power and hardly the form of religion. Neither do they improve in learning better than at other schools; no, nor yet so well. Insomuch, that some of our friends have been obliged to remove their children to other schools. And no wonder that they improve so little either in religion or learning; for the rules of the school are not observed at all. All in the house ought to rise, take their three meals, and go to bed at a fixed hour. But they do not. The children ought never to be alone, but always in the presence of a master. This is totally neglected, in consequence of which they run up and down the wood, and mix—yea, fight—with the colliers' children. They ought never to play, but they do every day—yea, in the school. Three maids are sufficient. Now there are four, and but one, at most, truly pious.

"How may these evils be remedied, and the school reduced to its original plan? It must be mended or ended, for no school is better than the present school. Can any be a master that does not rise at five, observe *all* the rules, and see that others observe them? There should be three masters and an usher, chiefly to be with the children out of school. The headmaster should have nothing to do with temporal things."

Adam Clarke, the celebrated commentator, who was educated at Kingswood, tells a still more tragic tale of chaos and corruption. "The school was the worst I had ever seen, though the teachers were men of adequate learning. It was perfectly disorganised; and in several respects, each did what was right in his own eyes. There was no efficient plan pursued. They

mocked at religion, and trampled under foot all the laws. The little children of the preachers suffered great indignities; and, it is to be feared, their treatment there gave many of them a rooted enmity against religion for life. The parlour boarders had every kind of respect paid to them, and the others were shamefully neglected. Scarcely any care was taken either of their bodies or their souls. . . . At the table every person when he drank was obliged to run the following gauntlet: He must drink the health of Mr. Simpson, Mrs. Simpson, Miss Simpson, Mr. Bailey, Mr. De Boudry, all the foreign gentlemen, then all the parlour boarders, down one side of the long table and up the other, one by one, and all the *visitors* who might happen to be there; after which it was lawful for him to drink his glass of beer."

Evidently, it was a bad fault to be a preacher's son. By a vigorous effort Wesley succeeded in somewhat reforming the school, but it was established on false principles, and whilst they remained in vogue, it was idle to anticipate any lasting or genuine improvement.

In classifying the various springs of Methodist brotherhood—or, viewing the matter from another standpoint, of the new Dissent—it is natural to place in the first category the influence of a distinctive psalmody. Germany stands pre-eminent as the home of the sacred lyric. When Luther trolled forth "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," the rugged but heroic strain awoke mighty echoes against which Rome's plain-song had never a chance. It will not have been forgotten how the Moravians sang, and Wesley listened, during the storm-scene on the Atlantic. Probably, his later intercourse with that community forced this

element of their worship more and more prominently before his notice. Again, when the Kingswood colliers had been converted, they excited some scandal in the neighbourhood, and some perplexity in Wesley's not illiberal mind, by their vigorous psalm-singing protracted far into the night. In the third place, the Wesleys, as a family, had a strong bent for poetry and undoubted talent for versification, while John and Charles Wesley were the devout leaders of a great popular movement. The inevitable outcome of these circumstances was a Methodist hymn-book, edited by the brothers, with a large infusion of original compositions.

Harbinger of a more important and more definitive compilation, there appeared, in 1739, a work entitled *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. To this volume John Wesley contributed at any rate twenty translations of German hymns, and Charles a number of his own pieces. It is believed that, in works published under their joint names, all translations from the German emanated from John Wesley. His niece, Miss Wesley, gave it as her opinion—it is hard to fix the value of her opinion—that to him and not to her father, who was by no means so conversant with the language, was this credit due.

Still, the poet of the movement, the "sweet singer" of Methodism, was, there is no gainsaying, Charles Wesley. John might be—he was—a competent translator, a correct and elegant verse-writer. But Charles was more; he had flaming in him something of the true poetic fire. Himself familiar with the varied phases of Methodist experience, he could describe with equal truth and equal sympathy the feelings of

a weeping sinner and a rejoicing saint; and all the intermediate emotions were to him as A B C. Methodism John Wesley defined as religion of the heart. Charles gave to the Methodist people a transfused and transfigured theology, theology rememberable as verse. Not didactic verse, though didaxis was in it, but verse that was passionate—perhaps too passionate.

There has been much unintelligent talk as to the nature and attributes of hymns. Dr. Johnson laid down that hymns—*i.e.* metrical compositions intended to be sung by Christian congregations—could not be poetry, because it was necessary to exclude the element of "invention." No doubt a hymn-writer labours under severe restrictions. The subject-matter is given; it cannot be handled capriciously. It is either Revelation or connected with Revelation. Furthermore, the hymn-writer represents a church, a school of thought, a system of belief. He must show himself orthodox. But his orthodoxy must not be too strait, too pronounced, for then he will offend men of other churches, other schools of thought, other systems of belief. The doctrines taught or assumed will be spurned. The terminology will seem strange and uncouth. On this account many of Wesley's hymns will never be popular, will never be felt as poetry, will barely be understood, beyond the pale of Methodism, or, at the widest, of Evangelical Christendom.

Dr. Johnson, however, referred to other considerations besides the invariable subject-matter. He was thinking of the artistic, the decorative, the *spectacular* side of poetry. Hymns, to be good, must do without those effects that make the most of novelty, that

pin attention to the manner, that impress you with the skill of the writer rather than the importance of his theme. Hymns may not be self-conscious. Figures of speech are to be introduced sparingly, and, as it were, reluctantly. If drawn from nature, they must be exceedingly simple; but commonly they will be more effective, if borrowed from the Sacred Writings. In the great hymns—the hymns that have swayed multitudes and will live for ever—the metaphor is the central—what is formally often the *initial*—idea. Set comparisons and illustrations are for the understanding. A good hymn kindles the emotions, touches and softens the heart.

It is said that in 1740 Charles Wesley was seated in his study when a small bird entered, pursued by a hawk. This was the origin of the hymn, "Jesu, Lover of my soul," which, with Toplady's "Rock of Ages," stands supreme, at the very apex of English hymnody. If a Greek poet had been thus inspired, he would have begun, "Just as a dove, pursued by a cruel hawk, flees to the bosom of a friendly man"; but Wesley, once thrilled, thinks no more of the little bird and its fierce enemy. Inspiration sweeps him along from type to antitype. The feelings, still fresh, are committed to paper; and many profoundly ignorant of the occasion have entered with full sympathy into the mood it created.

Mr. Gladstone did not think highly of Charles Wesley's reverie. For him it was a medley; it was not poetically *one*.[1] But it is safe to affirm that nobody ever wrote a good hymn, resolving to obey the

[1] The same objection might be urged to that touching funeral hymn, "Now the labourer's task is o'er."

rules of poetical art. A really successful hymn is more the result of chance than almost any other form of literary production. Some of Wesley's lay-preachers had, not quite the knack, but the coy and occasional luck of turning out such a specimen. One of the earliest was a Thomas Bakewell, who not only wrote a hymn, but lived to the venerable age of ninety-eight. His hymn is well known, being indeed that melodious "song of praise," of which the first stanza is as follows:

"Hail, Thou once despisèd Jesus!
Hail, Thou Galilean King!
Thou didst suffer to release us;
Thou didst full salvation bring.
Hail, Thou agonising Saviour,
Bearer of our sin and shame!
By Thy merits we find favour;
Life is given through Thy name."

Bakewell had a friend, Thomas Olivers, who likewise achieved the writing of a master-hymn. It seems that, during a visit to Bakewell's house at Westminster, Olivers found his way into the synagogue of the Jews. There he heard Signor Leoni declaim a celebrated air. Olivers coveted that air for his own people. On his return he sat down, and choosing the requisite metre, proceeded to indite a "song of praise" loftier, more austere than Bakewell's, which, for strength and sublimity, for striking phrase and profound conviction, reminds you of Isaiah and the prophets. It begins:

"The God of Abraham praise,
Who reigns enthroned above,
Ancient of Everlasting Days,
And God of Love:

Jehovah, GREAT I AM,
By earth and heaven confest;
I bow, and bless the sacred Name,
For ever blest."

James Montgomery, no mean judge, has said of this hymn, "There is not in our language a lyric of more majestic style, more elevated or more glorious imagery. Its structure indeed is unattractive on account of the short lines, but, like a stately pile of architecture, severe and simple in design, it strikes less on the first view than after deliberate examination."

Montgomery's allusion to metre suggests what is a serious fault in many of Charles Wesley's compositions — namely, an unsuitable, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say absurd, rhythm. The lilt of those frolicsome anapæsts is impossible out of comedy. How they came to be employed is a little mysterious. Not improbably, however, the hymns were written as libretto, to fit particular tunes. If another criticism may be permitted, it is that many of Charles Wesley's hymns are better adapted for private devotional study than for public worship. They are concerned with the fears and the failings, the hopes and the aspirations of the individual. No doubt congregations are made up of individuals, but the individuals that make up congregations are not Wesleys, and it is undesirable that they should be asked to express, as *I* or *me*, what they probably do not feel and may not sympathise with. Introspection, however, was the essence of Methodism.

Charles Wesley's hymns are not all of equal merit —a thing scarcely to be expected, seeing that at one period there were in circulation more than six thousand

of them. Mr. Swinburne has said that much that Wordsworth wrote was *rubbish*; and Dean Stanley inclined to a similar view of Wesley's verse. John Wesley, however, was firmly convinced of the excellence of his brother's best work. In the preface of the general definitive hymn-book, published in 1780, he writes with even more than his customary vigour and confidence: "Many gentlemen have done my brother and me (though without naming us) the honour to reprint many of our hymns. Now they are perfectly welcome so to do, provided they print them just as they are. But I desire they would not attempt to mend them; for they really are not able. None of them is able to mend either the sense or the verse. Therefore, I must beg of them one of these two favours: either to let them stand just as they are, to take them for better for worse; or to add the true reading in the margin, or at the bottom of the page; that we may be no longer accountable either for the nonsense or for the doggerel of other men."

Even more emphatic, and less equivocally generous, is a passage in the very last number of John Wesley's *Journal*. It is to the following effect:—

"I retired to Peckham; and at leisure hours read part of a very pretty trifle—the *Life of Mrs. Bellamy*. Surely never did any, since John Dryden, study more

'To make vice pleasing and damnation shine,'

than this lively and elegant writer. She has a fine imagination; a strong understanding; an easy style, improved by much reading; a fine, benevolent temper; and every qualification that could consist with a total

ignorance of God. But God was not in all her thoughts. Abundance of anecdotes she inserts, which may be true or false. One of them, concerning Mr. Garrick, is curious. She says: 'When he was taking ship for England, a lady presented him with a parcel, which she desired him not to open till he was at sea. When he did, he found Wesley's hymns, which he immediately threw overboard.' I cannot believe it. I think Mr. G. had more sense. He knew my brother well, and knew him to be not only far superior in learning, but in poetry, to Mr. Thomson and all his theatrical writers put together. None of them can equal him, either in strong, nervous sense or purity and elegance of language. The musical compositions of his sons are not more excellent than the poetical ones of their father."

Is it conceivable that the Wesleys, if they had not been Methodist preachers, would have forestalled the Lake school? A contributor to the *Spectator* (July 15, 1899), in the course of a brilliant article describing Wesley's services to England, observes: "We doubt if what the Germans call the *weltanschauung* of a nation was ever so rapidly transformed as was that of England in the last century. Think of the change from the aridity of the Deistic controversy and the hollow brilliancy of Bolingbroke and Chesterfield to the green pastures and still waters of the 'Lyrical Ballads,' and ask yourself what could have wrought such a marvellous resurrection from the dead. We cannot perhaps explain this, for the spirit, in the last analysis, moveth where it listeth, but we do see that the new literature and thought sprang from a new soil, watered by a new faith which once more saw the world to be divine, and men to be vitally

related in social bonds forged by God Himself. We do not suppose that the zealous converts of Methodism and the earnest preachers of the Evangelical revival could appreciate the fairy loveliness of the poetry of Coleridge or the bare grandeur of Wordsworth's noble sonnets. But we do say that each shared the new life, that each had passed from the desert of mechanism and formality into the promised land of freedom and truth."

It appears probable that, if John and Charles Wesley had thrown themselves into pure literature—as they might, perhaps, have done but for the attractions of theology—they would have instituted a reform, but that reform would hardly have shaped itself as pantheism or Nature-worship. Most likely its note would have been enthusiasm for humanity. John Wesley, at least, seems to have thought scorn of the pleasures of the country. Under the date of November 5, 1766, he pens the following reflections: "In the little journeys I have taken lately, I have thought much on the huge encomiums which have been for many ages bestowed on a country life. How have all the learned world cried out—

'O fortunati nimium, sua si bona norint, agricolæ!'[1]

But, after all, what a flat contradiction is this to universal experience! See that little house, under the wood, by the riverside! There is rural life in perfection. How happy then is the farmer that lives there! Let us take a detail of his happiness. He rises with (or before) the sun, calls his servants, looks to his swine and cows, then to his stables and barns. He

[1] "Too happy husbandmen, if they knew their blessings!"

sees to the ploughing and sowing his ground, in winter or in spring. In summer and autumn he hurries and sweats among his mowers and reapers. And where is his happiness in the meantime? Which of these employments do we envy? Or do we envy the delicate repast that succeeds, which the poet so languishes for?

> 'O quando faba, Pythagoræ cognata, simulque
> Uncta satis pingui ponentur oluscula lardo!'

'O the happiness of eating beans well greased with fat bacon! Nay, and *cabbage* too!' Was Horace in his senses when he talked thus, or the servile herd of his imitators? Our eyes and ears may convince us that there is not a less happy body of men in all England than the country farmers. In general their life is supremely dull; and it is usually unhappy too. For of all people in the kingdom they are the most discontented; seldom satisfied either with God or man."

The tone of this criticism resembles that of the Edinburgh Reviewer's chilling strictures on Wordsworth's first independent volume of poems. Relatively, however, to his own want of sympathy with Horace, Wesley might have given intellectual assent to the lines—

> "But there's a tree, of many one,
> A single field that I have look'd upon,
> Both of them speak of something that is gone:
> The pansy at my feet
> Doth the same tale repeat:
> Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
> Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

Intimately associated with hymns are hymn-tunes.

On this subject Wesley advised his preachers as follows: "Suit the tune to the words. Avoid complex tunes, which it is scarcely possible to sing with devotion. Repeating the same words so often, especially while another repeats different words, shocks all common sense, necessarily brings in dead formality, and has no more religion in it than a Lancashire hornpipe. Sing no anthems. Do not suffer the people to sing too slow. In every society let them learn to sing; and let them always learn our own tunes first. Let the women constantly sing their parts alone. Let no man sing with them, unless he understands the notes and sings the bass, as it is pricked down in the book. Introduce no new tunes till they are perfect in the old. Let no organ be placed anywhere till proposed in the Conference. Recommend own tune-book everywhere; and if you cannot sing yourself, choose a person or two in each place to pitch the tune for you. Exhort everyone in the congregation to sing, not one in ten only."

It was foolish of Wesley so persistently to deprecate and depreciate anthems, but his general notions about congregational singing are perfectly sound and in accord with the now universal practice. The old Methodist psalmody, despite Wesley's protests, was of a very flamboyant character, lines being iterated and reiterated till the non-musical listeners must have writhed in their seats.

For the first forty years of its existence Methodism was, so to speak, amphibious. Formally, it had many of the notes of Dissent. It had its own legislature, its own meeting-houses (too many, in the opinion of the Conference of 1783), its own schools, its own

hymn-book, and, of course, its own preachers. With all of these the heads of the English Church had nothing to do. The moving spirit of the whole complex organisation was John Wesley. But John Wesley professed himself an attached member of the Church of England, and, under disheartening conditions, endeavoured to persuade his followers—those who were not Dissenters—to conform to her rites and ceremonies. At this stage the Methodist society has somewhat the aspect of an association for the abolition of Dissent. Whereas the old Dissenting bodies — Presbyterians, Baptists, Independents—were in a condition of stagnation and decay, Methodism had all the qualities—notably, an immense vitality—calculated to attract temperaments which had heretofore found a congenial home in Dissent. As Methodist, a man might be at the same time Churchman and Dissenter; and if only the bishops had countenanced the new institutions—entering into a sort of honourable conspiracy with Wesley—Methodism would have formed a bridge from Dissent to Church, such as would have delighted Tillotson and other advocates of comprehension.

But it was not to be. So far from Dissent being annexed by the Church of England, Methodism was annexed by Dissent, and that virtually in Wesley's day and by Wesley's act. The final development was initiated by events connected with the American Revolution. Wesleyan Methodism, as distinct from Whitefield's variety, had been introduced into the southern provinces, as well as into the newly-conquered province of Canada, by lay-agents—into Canada, fitly enough, by officers of the British army. On the outbreak of the rebellion Wesley, very unwisely

and in opposition to his brother's advice, turned politician. He had always been a strong Tory—indeed, loyalty was, as he said, a part of his religion. In spite of that, he was at first inclined to side with the colonists, and wrote a long letter to the British Prime Minister, warning him of the risks to which he was committing the nation. This was no doubt a very wise document, if it was wise to handle politics at all; but in a few months the amateur statesman turned his back upon himself. The *volte face* was complete. The fact was that Wesley, though a veteran in divinity, was a tyro in the conduct of affairs, and, as has been said, he was a sturdy and honest Tory. Dr. Johnson, a brother Tory, engaged Wesley in conversation, and the lexicographer found little difficulty in persuading him that his views were erroneous. Johnson's own views were the reverse of moderate. "Sir," said he, "they are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for anything we allow them short of hanging." That was exactly the attitude of Lord North, and, in a treatise entitled "Taxation no Tyranny," Johnson attempted to justify it. His arguments were reproduced in an abridgment called "A Calm Address to the American People," of which John Wesley announced himself as the author. This calm address provoked a tremendous storm on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, and by many Wesley was held to have fully established his character of arch-Jesuit.

Notwithstanding the grave impolicy of this course, Methodism grew and prospered in America. During the ten years' struggle the membership rose from two to fifteen thousand. The strength of the Church of England proportionately declined. At the close of the

war it was on the verge of collapse. Many parishes were without a clergyman, and there were no bishops. There never had been bishops. Government had been adjured to send out a bishop, but, whether from policy or from sheer neglect, the demand had been ignored.

American Methodists were in a dilemma. Were the sacraments never to be administered, or were they to be administered by uncanonical persons? The latter solution commended itself to some minds, and, as a consequence, the duty was undertaken by certain of the preachers. Wesley's representative in America, Francis Asbury, did not approve of the practice, and in an explanatory letter suggested that Wesley himself should favour them with a visit. At the age of eighty, the Methodist leader could not think of accepting the invitation, but he adopted another hint of Asbury's. In a secret conclave at Bristol, he ordained three of his preachers—Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey—and sent them to the United States.

As a simple priest, Wesley had, of course, no business to ordain anyone, but the ordination of Dr. Coke had a special significance, and Wesley cannot be absolved from the charge of disingenuousness in his method of apology. Coke was already in priest's orders; why, then, should he submit to a second, and apparently superfluous, performance of the rite? The answer is that Coke was to go out as *superintendent*, and, on arriving, to exercise co-ordinate authority with Asbury. But Coke had not been long in America before his colleague and himself adopted the style of *bishops*—bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This was no doubt contrary to Wesley's desire. He did not object to the *thing*, but he greatly disliked the

name—that is, when assumed by his followers. Addressing Asbury, he writes: "How can you, how dare you, suffer yourself to be called bishop? I shudder, I start at the very thought! Men may call me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never by my consent call me bishop. For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this!"

Wesley, however, was ready to *act* as bishop. After a while, he ordained ministers for Scotland, alleging in excuse that the Church of England had no jurisdiction in that country. This was true enough. The Scots execrated the English liturgy even under Methodist patronage. "I dunno ken what ye mean by these unco inventions," they said. "We belong to the gude old Kirk of Scotland, and will not join with the Whore of Babylon at all."

This conduct of Wesley in ordaining men, though it was wholly inconsistent with his position as an Anglican priest (in respect of which it was, indeed, nothing less than a monstrous breach of discipline), was not inconsistent with his view, expounded forty years before, of Christian orders. When he boasted himself a high churchman and the son of a high churchman, he used the term mainly in a political sense. He alluded to the divine right of kings, to the duty of passive obedience. Doubtless he attached much importance to the sacraments. But he did not believe that as between bishop and presbyter there was any original or essential difference. Neither did he believe in the apostolic succession. He said: "I firmly believe I am a scriptural ἐπίσκοπος as much as any man in England or in Europe; for the uninterrupted

succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove." If he had not before exercised the right which, as he thought, God had given him, it was because he had deemed such exercise not expedient. He deemed it expedient now.

The ordinations at Bristol were carried out without reference to Charles Wesley, though he was within call, and would naturally have expected to be consulted. Informed of what had occurred, he wrote to John, articulating the nature of the occurrence. Lord Mansfield had said, and Charles Wesley agreed, that "ordination was separation." Charles made it plain that, while he did not propose to quarrel with his brother, still less was it his intention to aid and abet in any disloyalty to the Church of England. Further correspondence centred, in some measure, on the line,

"Heathenish priests and mitred infidels,"

penned by Charles in the heat and ignorance of youth, but now repudiated by him. "That juvenile line of mine," he wrote, "I disown, renounce, and with shame recant. I never knew of more than one 'mitred infidel,' and for him I took Mr. Law's word." John, however, replied, "Your verse is the sad truth. I see fifty times more of England than you do; and I find few exceptions to it."

These expressions smack more of Dissent even than the illegitimate ordinations. They prove that the persecution to which Wesley and his followers had been subjected for half a century had produced its inevitable result, that the iron had entered into his soul. But these sentiments occur in a private letter. Publicly,

Wesley still exerted himself to keep up the fiction of union. There could, however, be no real union when Wesley himself usurped episcopal functions, and the bishops did their best to unchurch his proselytes.

In the year before his death, Wesley wrote to a certain prelate a letter of remonstrance, in the course of which he remarked: "The Methodists in general, my lord, are members of the Church of England. They hold all her doctrines, attend her services, and partake of her sacraments. They do not willingly do harm to anyone, but do what good they can to all. To encourage each other herein, they frequently spend an hour in prayer and mutual exhortation. Permit me then to ask, *Cui bono?* For what reasonable end would your lordship drive these people out of the Church? Are they not as quiet, as inoffensive, nay, as pious, as any of their neighbours? Except, perhaps, here and there, a harebrained man who knows not what he is about. Do you ask, 'Who drives them out of the Church?' Your lordship does, and that in the most cruel manner. They desire a licence to worship God after their own conscience. Your lordship refuses it, and then punishes them for not having a licence. So your lordship leaves them only this alternative, 'Leave the Church, or starve.'"

The cry for separation seems to have come mainly from the local preachers. This was probably for two reasons. They were less under Wesley's inspiration and control, and they were more oppressed than the travelling preachers by constant false relations with the clergy. An omen of what was likely to occur was presented in the case of Lady Huntingdon's Connection. Two of her chaplains, both clergymen of the

Church of England, voluntarily embraced Dissent, in order that they might avail themselves of the Act of Toleration, and thus escape the peddling interference of a parish priest. Whilst he lived, however, the shadow of Wesley's great name, his unique authority, and his patriarchal age, conspired to stave off the unwelcome catastrophe of avowed schism.

Wesley was a charming old man. One who knew him well thus describes his appearance and manners: "The figure of Mr. Wesley was remarkable. His stature was low; his habit of body, in every period of life, the reverse of corpulent, and expressive of strict temperance and continual exercise; and his appearance, till within a few years of his death, vigorous and muscular. His face, for an old man, was one of the finest we have seen. A clear, smooth forehead; an aquiline nose; an eye the brightest and most piercing that can be conceived, and a freshness of complexion scarcely ever to be found at his years and impressive of the most perfect health, combined to render him a venerable and interesting figure. Few have seen him without being struck with his appearance; and many who have been greatly prejudiced against him have been known to change their opinion the moment they were introduced into his presence. In his countenance and demeanour there was a cheerfulness mingled with gravity; a sprightliness, which was the natural result of an unusual flow of spirits, and yet was accompanied with every mark of the most serene tranquillity. His aspect, particularly in profile, had a character of acuteness and penetration.

"In dress, he was a pattern of neatness and simplicity. A narrow plaited stock; a coat with a small

upright collar; no buckles at his knees; no silk or velvet in any part of his apparel; and a head as white as snow, gave an idea of something primitive and apostolic, while an air of neatness and cleanliness was diffused over his whole person."

John Wesley put on immortality on the second of March 1791, when he was in the eighty-eighth year of his age. He died as he had lived; and among the last things he said were the words, twice uttered, "The best of all is, God is with us." He was buried in the ground behind the chapel in City Road, London; and when the Rev. Mr. Richardson, who officiated, came to the sentence, "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother," he read instead, "of our dear father." The effect was instantaneous. The crowd, hitherto tearfully silent, broke into loud weeping. Charles had gone before. He died in 1788.

So much has been said, and so many illustrations given, of Wesley's character that a formal summary is hardly needed. If, however, a summary be demanded, it may be found in a phrase of Horace—"tenax propositi." Wesley held fast his purpose,—the moral and spiritual regeneration of society,—and to that purpose he was ready to sacrifice, and did practically sacrifice, all. His absolute devotion to a noble cause was the root of many eccentricities, and tinctured his views of men and things in a way that sometimes detracts from the reverence due to his lofty disinterestedness. When he believed that Dr. Coke was as free from ambition as from covetousness, he talked of an ideal Dr. Coke. The real Dr. Coke, Wesley's friend, was as ambitious a man as ever lived. Others were as un-

justly disparaged. Wesley had a great aptitude for abstract knowledge,—he was, beyond question, one of the best scholars of his day,[1]—but he either did not understand, or would not accommodate himself to, ordinary human nature. He attempted to fit people into his own groove, to engulf them in his own personality. The result was that his course was strewn with broken loves and severed friendships. Even Charles was at last reduced to a condition of semi-estrangement.

But Wesley was a glorious being. His zeal was matchless; and he accomplished, by prodigies of mental and physical effort, a vast and necessary work. The physic may have been nasty,—those fits, especially,—but Methodism arrested national decay and infused new life into Christianity. In the political sphere, though Wesley's direct intervention was not happily conceived, it is in every way probable that the influence of that high Tory over the masses did much to prevent an English analogue of the French Revolution by absorbing into the ranks of Methodism those who would naturally have been its leaders. The emancipation of the slaves, and, after that, other emancipations were the reflexion and the fruit of that inward emancipation of which Wesley was the preacher. The Evangelical movement, and the Oxford movement, in the Church of England, were both founded on the principle that religion was something other, something higher, than an aspect of civil life. This principle, which in the eighteenth century had been fairly lost, Wesley and his companions were bold enough to reassert.

For this all English-speaking men, irrespective of

[1] Dr. Johnson testifies that he could talk on any subject.

creed, have cause to be thankful. To take a single illustration—may we not trace the abolition of the duel in England to Wesley's influence? In every other European country the obligations of honour prescribe this reckless mode of settling certain disputes. Why is England exempt? The episode of the fashionable tailor is not an adequate explanation. The true reason is that the English conscience, as remodelled by Wesley, will not tolerate the making of widows and orphans on a frivolous pretext. However, Wesley was not precisely a saint. He was too active, too full of fight, to merit that description. But he was, pre-eminently, a man.

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